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## The Scope and Development of Kant's Theodicy

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# **THE SCOPE AND DEVELOPMENT OF KANT'S THEODICY**

**George Huxford**

**May 2015**

## ABSTRACT

The thesis which underpins the whole study is that Kant's engagement with theodicy was career-long and not confined to his short treatise of 1791, *On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies*, which dealt explicitly with the subject. In the study, Kant's developing thought on theodicy is treated in three periods, pre-Critical, early-Critical, and late-Critical. Each of the periods has its own special character, respectively that of exploration, transition, and conclusion. In the course of developing the underpinning thesis, I argue for a further five substantial theses:

- Kant's stance on theodicy developed through his career, from an essentially Leibnizian starting point to his own unique authentic theodicy.
- Kant did not reject all theodicies. He rejected so-called philosophical theodicies based on theoretical/speculative reason but advanced authentic theodicy grounded in practical reason. In this way he found a middle ground between philosophical theodicy and fideism, both of which he rejected.
- Kant's work in other areas, particularly that in natural science and his Critical epistemology, served to constrain his theodicy.
- Metaphysical Evil conceived as limitation and Kant's Radical Evil perform the same function, namely providing the ground for the possibility of moral evil in the world.
- Nevertheless, Kant's authentic theodicy fails (i) because it fails to meet his own definition (ii) it relies on the Highest Good which cannot bear the weight Kant puts on it because (a) there is no *a priori* deduction of a duty in its regard and (b) intractable difficulties in applying the Highest Good in practice.

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## Abbreviations

Primary sources are cited in the form: Work, Volume:Page of the *Akademie Ausgabe* edition of Kant's works, mostly published in translation at various dates by Cambridge University Press (see Bibliography for details). Where the translations are mine this is indicated. The following abbreviations have been adopted:

**LF:** *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte...* Thoughts on the true estimation of living forces...

**Refl:** *Reflexionen zur Metaphysik 3703-3705* - Three manuscript reflections on optimism.

**NE:** *Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio* - A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition.

**OPA:** *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* - The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God.

**UNH:** *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels oder Versuch von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprung des ganzen Weltgebäudes, nach Newtonischen Grundsätzen abgehandelt* - Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens, or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Entire Universe, treated in accordance with Newtonian Principles.

**EE2:** *Geschichte und Naturbeschreibung der Merkwürdigsten Vorfälle des Erdbebens welches an dem Ende des 1755sten Jahres einen großen Theil der Erde erschüttert hat* - History and natural description of the most noteworthy occurrences of the earthquake that struck a large part of the Earth at the end of the year 1755.

**Opt:** *Versuch einiger Betrachtungen über den Optimismus* - Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism.

**NM:** *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Grössen in der Weltweisheit einzuführen* - Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes in Philosophy.

**DP:** *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral* - Inquiry concerning the distinctness of the principles of natural theology and morality.

**Lect:** *Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre* - Lectures on Philosophical Theology.

**Idea:** *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher* - Idea for a Universal Natural History with a Cosmopolitan Aim.

**GW:** *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* - Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.

**CB:** *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* - Conjectural Beginning of Human History.

**CPR:** *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* - Critique of Practical Reason.

**CPI:** *Kritik der Urteilskraft* - Critique of the Power of Judgement.

**Failure:** *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee* - On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials.

**Rel:** *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* - Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings.

**End:** *Das Ende aller Dinge* - The End of all Things.

**SF:** *Der Streit der Facultäten* - The Conflict of the Faculties.

**MM:** *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* - The Metaphysics of Morals.

An exception is made for the first *Critique*, where the convention Annn/Bnnn is followed, indicating the page number of the first and second editions respectively.

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis which underpins and enables the whole study is that Kant was engaged with the subject of theodicy throughout his career and not merely in his 1791 treatise explicitly devoted to the subject, *On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies*<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, the study will trace his thought on this subject from early to late career to show not only the continuity of Kant's consideration but also his philosophical development on the subject.

Whilst theodicy, as an activity which attempted to find an answer to the problem of evil, had a long history *avant le mot*<sup>2</sup>, the word "theodicy" itself was introduced into the philosophical lexicon by G.W. Leibniz. Its etymology, a construction from the Greek words *theos* – God and *dike* – justice, reveals Leibniz's intended answer. In his *Theodicy* of 1710, Leibniz specifically strove to link these two ideas and show that God's justice could be successfully defended in the face of evil in the world. In this way, Leibniz sought to defeat both the scepticism of Pierre Bayle and fideism. Leibniz's defence of God in this matter was grounded on the claim that our world is the best possible which God could have instantiated from all the possible worlds which He contemplated. This notion of the best possible world is more often known because of the withering scorn to which it was inaccurately<sup>3</sup> subjected in Voltaire's *Candide*.<sup>4</sup> Once something is in the public domain, its author or originator often loses control of it to at least to some extent. In this way the meaning assigned to "theodicy" has evolved, as evidenced by the definition given in the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, namely 'the part of theology concerned with defending the goodness and omnipotence of God in the face of evil and suffering in the world' (Blackburn, 2008, 361). Within the philosophy of religion, scholars still offer their own versions. One recent example comes from Peter Byrne (2007, 122) who sees theodicy as 'a way of maintaining hope for the human good in the light of evil', a general and one might say a rather lightweight definition, with overtones of self-deception, which states what theodicy is *for* not what it *is*. That from Sam Duncan (2012, 974) tells us that a 'theodicy needs only to give

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter *Failure*. This title is the one adopted by Michel Despland for his translation of *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodizee*. It has been used in this study rather than the more usual *On the Miscarriage of all Philosophical Trials in Theodicy* because, in my view, the word "Miscarriage" is capable of sending the wrong signal. "Miscarriage" commonly suggests a legal process which has resulted in the wrong verdict. Significantly, it will be seen that at no point in *Failure* does Kant advance the notion that God has been falsely found innocent or guilty on the charge that He has allowed evil in the world; in other words, no verdict is pronounced. Also "failure" is more indicative of what goes wrong with the theodicies Kant considers.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Nadler (2008) for an account of theodicy in Jewish thought before Leibniz.

<sup>3</sup> Voltaire's attack was based on *a posteriori* cases of evil in the world; Leibniz's theodicy is an *a priori* argument.

<sup>4</sup> Murray and Greenberg (2013) note that 'Leibniz's approach to the problem of evil became known to many readers through Voltaire's lampoon in *Candide*: the link that Voltaire seems to forge between Leibniz and the extravagant optimism of Dr. Pangloss continues—for better or worse—to shape the popular understanding of Leibniz's approach to the problem of evil'.



an account how evils in the world could bring about a good that justifies them', a definition that seems to confine theodicies to just those that offer an instrumental or greater good account of evil. These two definitions are also remarkable in that they do not contain any explicit reference to God.

However, as his thought on theodicy is our focus, Kant's definition is the one on which we must concentrate. At first sight, it seems to respond to a different concern than Leibniz's solely with God's justice:

By "theodicy" we understand the defence of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counter-purposive in the world – We call this "the defending of God's cause" (*Failure*,8:255).

It can be noted that, although Kant is not explicit in his definition regarding whose or what purpose is being countered, he soon makes it clear that he is considering the counter-purposiveness which 'may be opposed to the wisdom of its [the world's] creator' (*Failure*,8:256). In his definition, Kant envisages a broad scope for theodicy by his inclusion of "whatever". This has prompted Elhanan Yakira (2009,148) to even suggest that Leibniz and Kant were indeed dealing with different questions on account of the different nature of evil being addressed. Whilst it has merit, Yakira's suggestion does not present a problem since, when *Failure* is examined, it will be seen that there are three types of counter-purposiveness considered: moral evil, physical evil, and injustice. As injustice concerns the relationship between the moral and the physical, I consider that Kant's definition of theodicy does not clash with that of Leibniz; it is just more explicit.

The word "reason" performs two simultaneous and powerful functions<sup>5</sup> which cannot be readily divorced from each other. The first function has the sense of thinking, understanding, and forming judgements logically which could be grouped under the one term "reasoning". The second function has the sense of cause, explanation, or justification for an action or event. I contend that Kant's definition demands that both functions are satisfied. For Kant, unlike the fideist, a successful theodicy can only be arrived at using reasoning. However, on arrival it should provide an explanation which reconciles the apparently irreconcilable, namely the counter-purposive and a theistic God. Thus the search for a theodicy is a search for an explanation which satisfies the demands of reason in both senses, in short, for a reasoned explanation.

Reason in its first function was supreme for Kant, not only in defining the limits of our possible knowledge, but also being the only foundation upon which to build a moral law that was not

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<sup>5</sup> Both taken from the Oxford Dictionary of English, 2nd Edn, Revised (2005)

externally imposed. It is clear from his definition of theodicy that Kant holds that it is *reason* which brings the charge against God concerning counter-purposiveness. It also shows that the struggle between reason's demands and belief in a theistic God was a live issue for him. That throughout Kant's life there was tension between the unrelenting demands of reason (and his own in particular) and his striving to retain a place for God in his philosophical system is not a new topic in the literature. However, whilst other authors have highlighted such tension, none to date have seen, as I do, Kant's career-long efforts to defuse it as an extended search for the reasoned explanation which would form an effective theodicy.

That for Kant there was tension between reason's demands and the notion of God should not be altogether surprising as one of the major undertakings and effects of the Enlightenment was to free humankind from the self-imposed tyranny of superstitious religion and give reason its head. Kant himself wrote in such terms in his 1784 essay *What is Enlightenment?* Some thinkers went to the opposite extreme from superstitious religion and denied God's existence *tout court*. There is abundant evidence that Kant was amongst those who could not or would not relinquish the notion of a deity who took a benevolent interest in His creation. I maintain that throughout his philosophical career, Kant retained a belief in God notwithstanding his aversion to organised religion. However, belief in God could never be allowed to undermine the primacy of reason. Strong evidence for this is that he continued to address the problems inherent in theodicy, construed as the reasoned explanation identified above. Nevertheless, it will be seen that what constituted a successful theodicy for Kant changed significantly as his career progressed. By 1791 he had concluded that all efforts to date to provide such a reasoned explanation were destined to fail when based on theoretical/speculative reason, in his terms, "philosophical" theodicy. If Kant was to maintain that theodicy *per se* was still possible an alternative route had to be found and he identified such a route in the treatise explicitly dealing with theodicy, *Failure*. Hence in this study, we must also be concerned with the extent to which Kant's theodicy succeeded where he saw the efforts of others failing.

However, 1791 and *Failure* is not the place to begin any examination of Kant on theodicy. His considerations, which started as early as 1753 with his reflections on Leibniz's theodicy and the supposed theodicy of Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Man*, continued throughout his philosophical career. Indeed, he continued beyond the 1791 treatise to produce writings of theodical relevance, notably *Religion with the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.<sup>6</sup> The best evidence for Kant's concern with theodicy is the richness of primary sources containing material germane to this study and this is illustrated in summary form in the table below.

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<sup>6</sup> Hereafter *Religion*

**Table 1. THEODICY PRIMARY SOURCES**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>1753-1754</b>	<i>Reflections 3703-5</i>	Pre-Critical	Kant reflects on Leibnizian theodicy and Pope's variant, favouring the latter. He raises two serious objections against that of Leibniz.
<b>1755</b>	<i>Universal Natural History</i>	Pre-Critical	Kant introduces the idea of universal laws of nature and their uninterrupted working. He endorses a Newtonian view of the physical world.
<b>1755</b>	<i>A New Elucidation of the first principles of metaphysical cognition</i>	Pre-Critical	Having again considered the notion of a Best Possible World, Kant examines whether human beings are free and God's responsibility (or not) for evil.
<b>1756</b>	<i>The 3 Earthquake essays</i>	Pre-Critical	Kant responds to the Lisbon earthquake (1755), claiming physical evil does not result from moral evil and is not divine punishment.
<b>1759</b>	<i>An Attempt at some Reflections on Optimism</i>	Pre-Critical	Kant mounts a stout metaphysical defence of the concept of the Best Possible World and God's choice thereof.
<b>1763</b>	<i>The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God</i>	Pre-Critical	Whilst in no way doubting God's existence, Kant registers dissatisfaction with metaphysical proofs of it. This threatens Leibnizian theodicy.
<b>1763</b>	<i>Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes in Philosophy</i>	Pre-Critical	Kant challenges the notion of evil conceived solely as limitation. He sees evil also as something negative with a positive ground and thus opposing the good. Evil is not only an absence. He makes an important differentiation between <i>mala defectus</i> and <i>mala privationis</i> .
<b>1781</b>	<i>Critique of Pure Reason (First Edition)</i>	Early-Critical	Kant shows that we are unable to have knowledge of God via theoretical reason. He also dismisses the three traditional proofs for God's existence. This will debar any theodicy based on such knowledge or proofs.
<b>1783-1784</b>	<i>Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion</i>	Early-Critical	Kant retains some aspects of Leibnizian theodicy, rejects others, and introduces some aspects which he will elaborate in later works.
<b>1784</b>	<i>Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim</i>	Early-Critical	Kant further considers aspects of theodicy raised in <i>Lectures</i> .
<b>1786</b>	<i>Conjectural Beginning of Human History</i>	Early-Critical	Kant deals with aspects of theodicy as reported in <i>Lectures</i> .
<b>1788</b>	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	Late-Critical	Kant argues for immortality and God as postulates of pure practical reason based on the Highest Good, thus advancing a moral faith.
<b>1790</b>	<i>Critique of the Power of Judgement</i>	Late-Critical	Kant advances a moral telos for humankind, the Highest Good, and discusses further the moral deity and moral faith.

<b>1791</b>	<i>On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies</i>	Late-Critical	Kant dismisses all philosophical theodicies but advances his own 'authentic' theodicy based on moral faith which in turn is based on practical reason as advanced in the second <i>Critique</i> .
<b>1793</b>	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i>	Late-Critical	Kant unequivocally assigns responsibility for evil to man which appears to free God from the responsibility, thus providing a theodicy.
<b>1794</b>	<i>The End of All Things</i>	Late-Critical	Kant asserts the impossibility of change in the non-temporal, intelligible world.

It is not too soon to look at a potentially viable counter to my underpinning thesis. The counter would be to dispute my claim that Kant was engaged with theodicy throughout his career. The textual support which could be called upon for this counter would be that, in his total works, as presented in the *Akademie Ausgabe*, Kant uses the word “*Theodizee*” only nineteen times, twelve occurring in the single late-Critical work, *Failure*, whilst yet others to refer to the title of Leibniz’s work<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, a subsidiary counter argument is also available. This is that it is possible to regard the treatise specifically devoted to theodicy, *Failure*, merely as a device for attacking the then prevailing intellectual climate in the reign in the Prussia of Frederick William II with its restrictions on theological and philosophical freedoms<sup>8</sup>. Dealing with this subsidiary counter first, I accept that Kant did utilise the treatise to criticise the political authorities. However, I will show in the main body of the study that this is not one of the treatise’s more important aspects, these being (i) Kant’s comparison of the types of counter-purposiveness with God’s moral attributes and his subsequent evaluation of theodicies, (ii) the proposal of his own authentic theodicy and (iii) his thought on sincerity which underlies authentic theodicy.

I hold that the principal counter is also defeasible. Further, it is best dealt with now before proceeding further as it touches on an important issue which supports many of the arguments which will be presented. The source of the defeat is to be found in Kant’s definition of theodicy. In short, just as theodicy as an activity existed before the word, whenever Kant considered the nature and properties of God and of evil with a view to reconciling them, he was engaged in theodicy even when not using the word. Now if Kant’s thought on God and evil were static, we could just trace his developing thought on the theodicies which attempted to reconcile them. This would form an interesting enough account but Kant’s thought on God and evil were far from static; significant developments took place in both areas. This meant that all changes in these two areas unavoidably had an impact on the work any putative theodicy had to do. When this is taken into account it will be immediately seen from the works listed in

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<sup>7</sup> Whilst this excludes references to “optimism” which in the pre-Critical period was largely synonymous with “theodicy”, this only adds another three references to the count.

<sup>8</sup> Beiser (1987,118) highlights Kant’s concern as expressed in *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren* (8:114).

Table 1 that they contain a wealth of material relevant to my purpose. In other words, Kant's thought on theodicy must be set in the context of his developing thought on God and evil. In this way, it is intimately related to Kant's overall treatment of these two subjects, which few would argue were not ever-present concerns in his philosophy. This view is supported by Yakira, who states that '[f]rom the Leibnizian Considerations on optimism of 1759, up to the anti-Leibnizian texts *On the failure of all the attempts to answer philosophical questions in regard to theodicy* of 1791<sup>9</sup> and *On the radical evil in human nature* of 1792<sup>10</sup>, Kant returns again and again to this issue [evil]' (2009,154). Nevertheless, the study cannot and will not attempt to offer a complete account of Kant on evil or on God. A full treatment of either subject on its own would not only deflect us from our purpose but also greatly exceed the scope available to this study. Illustrating this, in his authoritative *Kant Dictionary*, Howard Caygill states in the entry on "God", that 'a comprehensive account of the entirety of Kant's view on God...is still awaited' (1995,215). If Caygill's claim is still correct<sup>11</sup> and more than two hundred years Kant scholarship has not yet achieved this objective, then my aim here must be more modest. This study will only focus on those aspects of these two extensive subjects which interact with each other, actually or potentially, in theodicy.

Some more general introductory remarks are also in order. To find a successful theodicy is only a challenge for those who believe in God or want a place for a God in their philosophical system. Showing Kant was concerned with theodicy throughout his career provides evidence that Kant indeed strove to retain a place for God in his system and that his struggle to square a belief in God with reason's demands regarding evil was real and ongoing. I consider that it is fair to regard this struggle not as an abstract one for Kant but as personal since he was to the fore in his time in the effort to define reason's power and limitations. In addition, if evil can be fully explained away or dismissed then there is equally no need for theodicy as the reconciliation of evil with God's moral attributes and I believe Kant was equally aware of this. In short, the existence of both God and evil must be live propositions for anyone concerned with theodicy. If either is missing, the whole subject becomes moot.

It is also useful to position the project about to be undertaken in the context of Kantian scholarship. A significant motivation for studying the scope and development of Kant's theodicy is that it is a topic rarely considered by Kant scholars, a notable exception being A.L. Loades' excellent *Kant and Job's Comforters* (1985). Also, as we will be concerned with the whole of Kant's career, this study will necessarily encompass Kant's pre-Critical period, again a

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<sup>9</sup> *Failure*

<sup>10</sup> The first part of *Religion*

<sup>11</sup> Peter Byrne's *Kant on God* (2007) is directed at this lacuna

relatively lightly studied area<sup>12</sup>. The combined effect of subject and time-period, both lightly studied, means there are relatively few secondary sources to inform an examination of Kant's thought on theodicy in this period. The tenor of this part of the study will thus be one of exploration, seeking to identify the thematic development in the primary material. This situation changes dramatically with respect to the Critical period, both early and late. There, papers devoted to Kantian theodicy are available, albeit still in relatively limited numbers when compared to other aspects of his philosophy. But, given that the study's scope must include the changes in Kant's stance on God and evil, there is abundant material, particularly on the key issue of the Highest Good<sup>13</sup>. Here the emphasis will be far less on establishing what Kant said but rather on looking at it afresh in the light of Kant's concern with theodicy. It is my aim to view Kant's Critical period in a theodical light whilst taking care not to introduce any artificial distortions by forcing the reader to interpret it through a theodical lens.

However, the subject of Kantian theodicy has received a timely and welcome boost with two recent papers, Sam Duncan's 'Moral Evil, Freedom and the Goodness of God: Why Kant abandoned Theodicy' (2012), and 'Kant's Kritik der Theodizee - Eine Metakritik' by Hubertus Busche (2013). Whilst I differ from them in key areas it is my hope that, through this study, I will be able to contribute to the debate on Kant and theodicy which has been re-enlivened by their valuable contributions.

Before starting our theodical journey, set out in summary below are the main and subsidiary theses for which I will be arguing, together with some important qualifications.

### *Main Theses*

In the course of this study I will advance six major theses.

(a) The first and all-encompassing one is that that Kant had a career-long concern with theodicy, (contra Loades) where theodicy is construed as above, and that his concern is not confined to *Failure*. According to this thesis, whenever Kant is engaged in a rational reconciliation between evil and God, I contend that he is, in essence and effect, engaged in theodicy. His efforts to find such a reconciliation represent a career-long search for an effective theodicy.

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Schönfeld (2000,6, also n3,p.248) has examined the incidence of articles on the pre-Critical period and found that of the 500 approx. articles on Kant which have appeared in the *Kant-Studien* of the last sixty years, less than two dozen concern his pre-Critical philosophy.

<sup>13</sup> The secondary literature considered as part of this study, reflecting various stances on the Highest Good, is:- Auxter(1979), Beck(1960), Beiser(2006), Caswell(2006), Denis(2005), Engstrom(1992), Friedman(1984), Mariña(2000), Murphy(1965), Reath(1988), Silber(1959), Smith(1984), Wood(1970), Zeldin(1971).

(b) Kant's stance on what constituted a successful theodicy developed through his career starting from at least a partial endorsement of Leibniz's theodicy in his pre-Critical Period. In the early part of his Critical period, Kant did not have a clear position on theodicy but later he established his substantive position in advancing his own, authentic, theodicy. This authentic theodicy marked a discontinuity in his thinking and was grounded in moral faith based on *practical* reason, not simple fideism which he rejected. In his pre-Critical and early-Critical periods, Kant had accepted philosophical theodicies but with *Failure* he no longer did so.

(c) This follows from (b.) Kant did not reject *all* theodicies (contra Duncan). However, he did indeed reject all *philosophical* theodicies in *Failure*. The use by Kant of the word "philosophical" in connection with theodicies requires clarification. For him, these theodicies are based upon *theoretical, speculative*, reason. Additionally, he later also terms such theodicies "doctrinal". Further, given this special use of "philosophical", it would be an unwarranted inference that his 'authentic' theodicy was therefore in any way non-philosophical where "philosophical" is given its natural, broader reading.

(d) The cumulative effect of Kant's consideration of natural science and of his Critical epistemology acted to constrain his own eventual theodicy. The former constraint limits the evil to be reconciled within a theodicy. The latter constraint forces the would-be theodicy constructor to seek another route to God which does not amount to a knowledge claim and yet provides a robust enough foundation on which to base a theodicy.

(e) Metaphysical evil conceived as limitation in Leibniz's taxonomy of evil performs the same function as Kant's late-Critical radical evil, namely providing the ground for the possibility of moral evil.

(f) The thesis with which the study culminates is that Kant's own, authentic, theodicy fails. Firstly, it does not meet Kant's own definition of theodicy. Secondly, it fails because it is ultimately grounded on his notion of the Highest Good. This cannot bear the weight which Kant places upon it due to (i) his not providing an *a priori* deduction for a duty towards it and (ii) significant practical difficulties in application. However, this failure does not imply that Kant was not therefore concerned with theodicy throughout his career. His sincere efforts, based on his moral system grounded in *practical* reason, can still be correctly termed an attempted *reasoned* explanation of how the apparently irreconcilable, God and evil, can be reconciled.

#### *Subsidiary Theses*

There are a number of by-products worthy of note which emerge from the work to establish the main theses.

The first is that Kant changed his stance on evil as a limitation in 1763 with *Negative Magnitudes* not in 1790 as a result of the work of C.C.E. Schmid (contra Duncan). The second is that the happiness component of the Highest Good must exclude freedom from natural harm and freedom from the effects of others' immoral (in)actions. Whilst Kant repeatedly states that the two components of the Highest Good, virtue and happiness, cannot be combined in the correct proportion in the sensible world, his arguments for this can be reinforced by consideration of these two exclusions. The third is that Kant's rejection of philosophical theodicies is sound, as it is ultimately based on the epistemological boundaries established in the first *Critique*. This differs from the approach of Busche who concentrates on assessing the soundness of the individual arguments which Kant uses to reject the evaluated theodicies. Although Busche makes some compelling criticisms of Kant's individual arguments, the overall effect is to downplay Kant's rejection of philosophical theodicies *per se*. Finally, since Kant rejects philosophical theodicies on principle, I will claim that his rejection is more comprehensive than rejection of those arguments based on moral evil (contra Duncan).

The study is presented in 3 parts, each of which covers one of the time periods into which Kant's career was divided in Table 1.

#### *Part A - The Pre-Critical Period*

As stated earlier, I characterise the period as exploratory on Kant's part. We should not, however, expect a smooth, linear, progression in his thought or consistency in this period<sup>14</sup>. This will be clearly seen in the detailed examination. Nevertheless, the period was still one in which Kant reached definitive positions on certain aspects of theodicy that were retained by him through his whole career. The first of these is that Kant embraced the idea of a physical world governed by universal laws of nature as described by Newton whilst still retaining a place for God in his philosophical system. Second, Kant came to see the harm done in nature not as evil despite any unfortunate effects on human beings and certainly not as the punishment for the moral evil which humans commit. Third, I will argue that it was in this period that Kant first provided strong evidence of moving from accepting evil as only arising from limitation to a position where he also saw it as something ontologically positive. These three aspects will be discussed in Chapter 2. Other topics on which Kant did not reach a conclusive result included necessitation as opposed to freedom, and the possibility of a successful theoretical proof for God's existence. All these topics deserve detailed attention because of the material they contain relevant to theodicy. However, before proceeding to this,

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<sup>14</sup> Indeed Cassirer (1908,92-94) considers that the whole of Kant's career was typified by erratic progress towards its goals.



it is important to recognise that any discussion of theodicy during Kant's pre-Critical period must always be set in the context provided by Leibniz's *Theodicy* of 1710. Thus it is with this topic that the detailed examination starts in Chapter 1. Part A concludes with Chapter 3 where we ask whether philosophical theodicies as characterised by Kant were possible for him in this pre-Critical period.

#### *Part B - The Early-Critical Period*

Treatment of this period is an essential bridging element in this study as it is not sufficient to merely contrast the pre-Critical starting point of Kant's theodical journey with his eventual late-Critical destination. In examining this period, I am differing from the approach of Loades (cf.1985,76) who considers that theodicy or optimism was a subject only taken up by Kant in early and late career. In contrast, I hold that (i) Kant's consideration of theodicy continued through mid-career (ii) the early-Critical period offers the scholar much in the way of explanation of his late career stance. "Transition" fits well with this period because it conveys a sense of moving, modification, evolution, and indeed change but without abrupt, discontinuous, or revolutionary change. There are topics, significant for theodicy, where Kant's views are continuous with, or unchanged from, his pre-Critical period and topics where there was indeed a clear change of mind. Also, there are topics which can be described as innovations in the sense that they are appearing in his thoughts for the first time but not yet taking the definitive form adopted in his late-Critical period. It is the presence and nature of these three categories which give good reason for viewing this period as transitional. I will argue that, whilst the period is transitional for Kant on theodicy, it is one which nevertheless ends with significant unresolved tensions in his views on the subject. Chapter 4 deals with two important preliminaries (i) justifying reliance on the *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*<sup>15</sup> which recorded lectures given in 1783/4 and (ii) investigating the impact of the first *Critique* on theodicy *überhaupt*. Then, in Chapter 5, the various topics, grouped into unchanged, changed, and innovations, are considered together with the implications for any possible theodicy. In this part's final chapter, 6, we will first ask again whether philosophical theodicy is possible for Kant before lastly considering the tensions which remain unresolved at the end of the period due to Kant's epistemology running ahead of his thought on theodicy.

#### *Part C - The Late-Critical Period*

Kant's change of stance on theodicy was not coincident with the famous Copernican turn in his metaphysics and epistemology<sup>16</sup>. His theodical thought lagged behind. In the late-Critical

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<sup>15</sup> Hereafter *Lectures*

<sup>16</sup> A view supported by Christophe Schulte (1991,372) and Duncan (2012,974) amongst others.

period, theodicy caught up when Kant adopted his authoritative stance on the subject. This did not occur in an incremental fashion, resolving the individual tensions to be described in Part B but with a single step, his 1791 treatise *Failure*. In Part C, we will adopt Kant's *modus operandi* and move directly to consideration of *Failure* where Kant had two principal aims, one negative and the other positive.

His negative aim is to dismiss all philosophical theodicies and this is considered in Chapter 7. This is a fundamental change from his early-Critical period when Kant still saw such theodicies as possible. Both Kant's method of working and the arguments put forward in *Failure* will be examined in order to test his claim. One issue which he deals with in rejecting philosophical theodicies is the perennial one of evil as limitation, so the evaluation of his negative aim will be followed by revisiting his taxonomy of evil. This will be first treated in Part A of the study, Kant's pre-Critical period, but in Part C we explore whether his thought on evil can be brought into a final unified form. In Chapter 8, I argue that it can.

As Kant did not reject *all* theodicies, his positive aim in *Failure*, namely to advance his own 'authentic' theodicy, is then explored in Chapter 9. A subsidiary objective was to use the work to obliquely attack the atmosphere of intellectual-theological censorship which existed in Prussia at the time of its writing. At first glance, this might seem irrelevant to theodicy were it not for the fact that Kant was concerned not only with intellectual freedom but also with honesty and sincerity. These will be seen to be key components of his 'authentic' theodicy. Since Kant shows to his satisfaction that all philosophical theodicies fail, we must ask whether his own theodicy fares any better. The outcome of this is that, in Chapter 9, I also advance the first argument for the failure of authentic theodicy, namely that it does not meet Kant's own definition of theodicy.

In Chapter 10, Kant's authentic theodicy is subject to two further tests. The first examines what I term the "chain of dependency", namely those concepts on which authentic theodicy depends. These are moral faith, the moral "proof" and the Highest Good. In investigating this philosophical foundation, essential material from the *Groundwork* and the second and third *Critiques* will be examined. These works, bypassed chronologically in moving directly to *Failure*, will be drawn into the narrative together with the work which immediately followed *Failure*, *Religion*. I argue that the chain breaks through its reliance on the Highest Good because Kant does not provide an *a priori* deduction for a duty towards it. The second test in the chapter is to examine the challenges of applying the Highest Good in practice.

I conclude the study by summarising the results and outlining some of the implications for moral faith, the Highest Good, and theodicy.

## PART A - THE PRE-CRITICAL PERIOD - A TIME OF EXPLORATION

### Introductory Remarks

This first period was one of exploration into theodicy for Kant in which he examined existing theodicies, principally, but not exclusively that of Leibniz. He also identified the first constraints which later help define the available scope for his own theodicy. At times, as befits a time of exploration, Kant appears to change his mind and offer perspectives that do not always cohere with earlier views. But it would be inappropriate to insist on coherence at a time when Kant was making the first efforts to formulate his position on theodicy. The themes to be examined, in addition to his stance on Leibniz's theodicy, will include how Kant endorses a Newtonian worldview in which the laws of nature are ubiquitous and unchanging, his thoughts on necessitation and freedom, and his evolving views on the origin and nature of evil. Attention to the last mentioned is particularly important because, in order to assess Kant's theodical thought, we must be certain which evils he is addressing and which not.

### CHAPTER 1 - KANT AND THE OPTIMISM OF LEIBNIZ

A prime example of Kant not always steering a steady course in his pre-Critical exploration of theodicy is his attitude towards that of Leibniz. Although there are some references to Leibniz's system in other pre-Critical works, Kant offers us two main sources of evidence on this subject. These are Reflections 3703-5 from 1753/4<sup>17</sup> and his *Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism*<sup>18</sup> from just five years later in 1759. The problem and challenge for the Kant scholar is that they are radically different both in tone and content. The Reflections relate Kant's understanding of Leibnizian theodicy and offer a comparison by him with the supposed system of Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Man* (1734). In addition, in Reflection 3705, Kant also tables two non-trivial criticisms of Leibniz's system. *Optimism*, on the other hand, is a ringing endorsement of a key aspect of Leibnizian theodicy, that of the best possible world. However, any attempt to relate the two texts to each other and search for their possible reconciliation can only follow a closer look at both sources. We start with the Reflections.

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<sup>17</sup> These were most likely his notes for a possible entry in the prize-essay announced by the Prussian Royal Academy in 1753 for its 1755 prize essay competition with the optimism of Alexander Pope as contained in his *Essay on Man* as its subject. The competition was designed by Maupertuis as an indirect attack on the optimism of Leibniz by inviting respondents to compare the systems of Pope and Leibniz. Kant's notes thus contain comment on both. In the event Kant did not enter the competition which suggests that even his early thoughts on optimism/theodicy were still in a formative stage.

<sup>18</sup> Hereafter *Optimism*

It is in Reflection 3704 that Kant starts his consideration of Leibnizian optimism (theodicy<sup>19</sup>) with the following: '[o]ptimism is the doctrine which justifies the existence of evil in the world by assuming that there is an infinitely perfect, benevolent and omnipotent original Being' (*Refl*,17:230). This is best read as optimism being the attempt to justify the presence of evil *despite* there being an infinitely perfect, benevolent and omnipotent original Being. In my reading of this, there is also a suggestion that Kant did not differentiate between assuming that God exists and relying on an antecedent proof of God's existence as Leibniz does<sup>20</sup>. There is, of course, a clear difference in the robustness of these two cases. However, Kant further shows his understanding of the Leibnizian system with the following which encompasses the crucial notion of the best possible world:

This justification is furnished by establishing that, in spite of all the apparent contradictions, that which is chosen by this infinitely perfect Being must nonetheless be the best of all that is possible (*Refl*,17:231).

This could also suggest that God could only choose the best because it is God who is doing the choosing, an idea to which we will return when examining *Optimism* in detail. Kant continues:

The presence of evil is attributed, not to the choice of God's positive approval, but to the inescapable necessity that finite beings will have essential defects. These defects have been introduced into the scheme of creation without guilt on God's part by his decision to permit them (*Refl*,17:231).

With this, he highlights another key aspect of Leibnizian theodicy, namely the differentiation between God's *antecedent* and the *consequent* will. The former means that God wills no evil *per se*, but the act of creation unavoidably involves creating beings with limitations which are the condition of the possibility of evil. Thus God only allows or permits evil consequent upon creation without wanting evil *per se*. Leibniz had expressed this as:

Hence the conclusion that God wills all good *in himself antecedently*, that he wills the best *consequently* as an *end*, that he wills what is indifferent, and physical evil, sometimes as a *means*, but that he will only permit moral evil as the *sine quo non* or as a hypothetical necessity which connects it with the best. Therefore the *consequent will* of God which has sin for its object, is only *permissive*. (§25/H138)<sup>21</sup>

Leibniz reinforces this position at §114/H186 when he states that '[t]he supreme goodness of God causes his antecedent will to repel all evil, but moral evil more than any other: it only admits evil at all for irresistible superior reasons, and with great correctives which repair its ill

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<sup>19</sup> In the early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century "optimism" and "theodicy" were largely synonymous, although, strictly speaking, a theodicy is just one example of optimistic philosophy. In this study the two words will be used as synonyms without, I trust, any distortion in exposition or analysis.

<sup>20</sup> Leibniz refers to such proof in *Theodicy* §44

<sup>21</sup> References in this form are to *Theodicy* section number/page number from Huggard translation

effects to good advantage'. Kant confirms his understanding of the importance of the concept of antecedent and consequent wills to Leibniz's system in stating:

One only needs consider his [Leibniz's] distinction of evils from the point of view of the will which precedes and of the will which follows; the former endeavours to exclude all evils, while the latter includes them within its scheme as the inescapable consequences of the eternal nature of things (*RefI*,17:231).

This also provides an opportunity to acknowledge Leibniz's taxonomy of evil from which Kant provides no evidence of disagreement in the Reflections under consideration.

Evil may be taken metaphysically, physically and morally. *Metaphysical evil* consists in mere imperfection, *physical evil* in suffering and *moral evil* in sin. Now although physical evil and moral evil are not necessary, it is enough that by virtue of the eternal verities they may be possible (§21/H136).

Here metaphysical evil arises from creation's finitude which means that it must necessarily fall short of the Creator's perfection. The other two types of evil Kant describes as 'those which are contingent, and are either hypothetical and physical or hypothetical and moral' (*RefI*,17:231). Here, it is important to recognise the connection which Leibniz sees between moral and physical evil as shown in the following:

It is therefore not God who is the cause of moral evil: but he is the cause of physical evil, that is, the punishment of moral evil. And this punishment, far from being incompatible with the supremely good principle, of necessity emanates from that one of its attributes, I mean its justice, which is not less essential to it than its goodness. (§155/H220)

Leibniz could not be clearer; physical evil is punishment for moral evil.<sup>22</sup> For him, this is consistent with God as a just judge. This is another key element in Leibniz's theodicy but Kant will reject this connection between physical and moral evil as early as 1755 in *Universal Natural History*. Kant does not reconsider this rejection at any point later in his philosophical career; indeed he endorses explicitly at various points including the Earthquake Essays of 1756. The above citation also suggests that Leibniz sees justice being dispensed in this world and not, unlike Kant, finally achieved in the next. Notwithstanding that, Leibniz prefigures Kant in stating that:

one cannot deny that there is in the world physical evil (that is, suffering) and moral evil (that is, crime) and even that physical evil is not always distributed here on earth according to the proportion of moral evil, as it seems that justice demands (§43/H98).

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<sup>22</sup> In the view of Susan Neiman, however, this is merely an unproved assertion. She holds that '[t]he assumption that moral and natural evils are causally linked is an assumption Leibniz never subjected to scrutiny. Modern readers may turn every page of the Theodicy with the hope that its author will address the point most in need of argument, but Leibniz held the connection between moral and natural evils to be too self-evident to warrant serious question' (2002,22).

This imbalance<sup>23</sup> between moral behaviour and well-being (the lack of physical suffering) is a central concern for Kant. We will see that it remains so throughout his philosophical career. Later, it drives a major innovation in his moral philosophy which underpins his own eventual, 'authentic', theodicy. The innovation in question is the Highest Good, consideration of which will form a later chapter in this study.

Another important aspect of Kant's understanding of Leibniz's optimism is set out in the following two passages:

God's wisdom and goodness nonetheless turns them [the permitted evils as a result of creation] to the advantage of the whole, so that the displeasure they arouse when viewed in isolation is completely outweighed in the whole by the compensation which the divine goodness is able to institute (*RefI*,17:231).

And

But, appealing to the goodness, wisdom and power of God which are sufficiently well-known from other indisputable reasons, he gives such people reason to hope that the defects will be balanced by benefits in the whole; he also gives them reason to believe that, though evils may in the end spoil even the best plan, they could not be eliminated from the totality without producing an even greater irregularity (*RefI*,17:232).

Two important aspects stand out here. Firstly, both passages suggest that Kant's understanding of Leibniz's theodicy is what could be termed a "Net Good Theodicy" which entails that the presence of a particular evil is justified on the basis that the harm it does is outweighed by the good that evil produces in general. If indeed that was what Kant understood at the time, he was mistaken. Leibniz was quite clear at several points in his *Theodicy* that he was not seeking to defend individual evils. This was the same misapprehension which Voltaire was under in *Candide*. Should Leibniz have been arguing in such a manner it would have been *a posteriori*. However, this is not the nature of Leibniz's theodicy which is an *a priori* argument in which he is concerned with the goodness of creation as a whole. He argues that there is no way that we can know that removing a particular moral evil would create a better whole, stating '[t]hus one can esteem fittingly the good things done by God only when one considers their whole extent by relating them to the entire universe' (§119/H191) but we simply do not have such a universal view (cf. §211-4/H260-2). Further, just as Kant and Pope will do later, Leibniz considers that the good in the world is not to be assessed solely from a human standpoint or even that of rational creatures in general.

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<sup>23</sup> The imbalance is also considered in *Failure* as the third type of counter-purposiveness which theodicy seeks to explain.

Secondly, it can also be noted that Kant does not question God's goodness, wisdom, or power, regarding them as 'sufficiently well known from other indisputable reasons'. Unfortunately, Kant does not set out these reasons or their source. From such we would know whether Kant was relying upon a theoretical proof of God's existence or was just assenting to those attributes normally assigned to a theistic God in the mid-eighteenth century. The second citation also suggests a "Limited View Theodicy" where our judgement of our world as sub-optimal results from our inability to see the whole of God's creation. We have seen above that Leibniz would have approved of this aspect of Kant's understanding. Kant provided his final verdict on these two theodicy types in his late-Critical period when they were among the variants considered in *Failure*.

Unsurprisingly, these Reflections also contain material on Pope's *Essay* since the Prussian Royal Academy prize essay question for 1755 specifically requested a comparison of the optimistic systems of Leibniz and Pope. Holding the latter's to be superior, Kant identifies the key difference in his view between them with the following:

Leibniz admitted that the irregularities and imperfections, which upset those who are of good disposition as if they were true imperfections, were indeed true imperfections (*Refl*,17:233).

In other words, inasmuch as evil is a shortfall from perfection, there is evil. Also Neiman highlights this key point when she states that 'Leibniz's assertion is no claim about the goodness of this world; it is simply a claim that any other would have been worse' (2002,22). This contrasts with Pope who states at several points in the *Essay* '[w]hatever is, is right' (1/10<sup>24</sup>, 4/5,7). As a result Pope does not admit defects; they are only apparent. However if such a construct is to work and is to consider all evil that is in the world, moral evil must also fall under '[w]hatever is, is right'. Kant gives no indication whether his preference for the Popean system extends to his endorsing such a stance but, in my view, this is doubtful. But when one examines the *Essay* it is clear that Pope at least is definitely prepared to consider the possibility of moral evil also resulting from fixed laws of nature:

- . If plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven's design,
- . Why then a Borgia, or a Cataline<sup>25</sup>? (1/5)

And

- . From pride, from pride, our very reas'ning springs;
- . Account for moral as for natural things:
- . Why charge we Heaven in those, in these acquit?
- . In both, to reason right, is to submit. (1/5)

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<sup>24</sup> References in this form are to the Epistle/Section of Pope's *Essay*

<sup>25</sup> A first century BCE Roman revolutionary and traitor against whom many accusations of evil were laid.

From the two citations above, we can see in addition that Pope does not accept physical evil as evil, where physical evil is taken as the harmful results of the ubiquitous and unchanging laws of nature. Clearly, Pope's view that *all* apparent evils are just the results of the laws of nature would mean that we are necessitated in our moral behaviour. Should that be the case, there would be no moral evil *per se* since responsibility for (im)moral actions could then not be assigned to human beings. In such circumstances there would be no job for theodicy left to do. There is, however, no indication in Kant's writings that he accepted or even entertained the idea that moral evil was the unavoidable consequence of laws of nature. This is just as well as any defender of God's goodness and justice would have an uphill task to show how God was not responsible for moral evil in choosing to instantiate a possible world where this was unavoidable. Nevertheless, Kant's notes showed that he fully understood the impact of Pope's stance with the following in which he makes no exception of moral evil:

[T]hings can have no other properties, not even those which are called essentially necessary, apart from those which harmonise together to give complete expression to [God's] perfection. Pope subjects the creation to detailed scrutiny, particularly where it most seems to lack harmony; and yet he shows that each thing, which we might wish to see removed from the scheme of greatest perfection, is also, when considered in itself, good (*RefI*,17:233).

To my mind, what is prompting Kant's thought here are the nature and limits of compossibility – how things, good when considered individually, when combined do not also produce good. Kant revisits the issue in Reflection 3705 which opens with an accurate summary of Leibniz's system.

Leibniz was right to call his system a theodicy, or a defence of God's good cause. For, on the assumption that God may perhaps be the author of evil, the assurance that, as far as it is within his power, everything is good, and that at least it is not his fault if not everything turns out as perfectly as it ought, if it is to accord with what honest people would wish – that assurance is indeed, nothing but a justification of God (*RefI*,17:236).

However, Kant immediately follows this by explicitly rejecting the Leibnizian system stating that '[t]he errors of this theory are indeed too serious for us to be able to accept it' (*RefI*,17:236). He signals two such errors, the first concerning compossibility, identifying the kernel of this error as:

What is it which causes the essential determinations of things to conflict with each other when combined together, so that the perfections, each of which would increase God's pleasure, become incompatible with each other? What is the nature of the unfathomable conflict which exists between the general will of God, which aims only at the good, and the metaphysical necessity which is not willing to adapt itself to that end in a general harmony which knows no exceptions? (*RefI*,17:236)

In other words, Kant believes he has identified a metaphysical requirement to which even God's intentions must yield and it is this, not God, which results in things which are perfect in



isolation becoming imperfect in combination. Additionally, should that be the case, this 'metaphysical necessity' must be outside God, so undermining His omnipotence and any notion that He encompasses all reality. Neiman supports such an interpretation. She states that 'his [Leibniz's] defence of God argued that God could not have done any better than He did. But every lawyer has his price. In the process of defending God, Leibniz disempowered Him' (2002,26). This is serious when we recall that, in Kant's view, Leibniz's optimism assumes an omnipotent original Being (cf. *Refl*,17:230). Kant reflects further on why one good combined with another can result in something less than good and eventually reaches the conclusion that '[t]he whole mistake consists in the fact that Leibniz identifies the scheme of the best world on the one hand with a kind of independence, and on the other hand with a dependence on the will of God' (*Refl*,17:237). The two horns of the apparent dilemma are (i) the independence from God resulting from the 'metaphysical necessity' (cf.*Refl*,17:236) which prevents two perfections being perfect in combination and (ii) the dependence on the will of God comes from the notion that all is from God. In my view, the dilemma is only resolved when, in effect, Kant embraces *both* horns in works from 1763. First, in Kant's *Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*<sup>26</sup>, God is recognised as source of everything which is possible. Second, in *Negative Magnitudes* Kant recognises that non-compossibility when arises two entities have logically conflicting attributes (*NM*,2:171) and even God cannot alter this. However, that eventual resolution does not affect what is at issue here in 1753/4, his problem with Leibniz's system of optimism containing this apparent impasse of compossibility.

In Kant's eyes, the second error in the Leibnizian system is no less serious. Kant's exposition of the problem cannot be improved upon and is therefore worthwhile citing in full:

The second chief mistake of optimism consists in the fact that the evils and irregularities which are perceived in the world are only excused on the assumption God exists; the mistake consists, therefore, in having first to believe that an Infinitely Benevolent and Infinitely Perfect Being exists, before one can be assured that the world, which is taken to be His work, is beautiful and regular, instead of believing that the universal agreement of the arrangements of the world...itself furnishes the most beautiful proof of the existence of God and of the universal dependency of all things on Him. The most reliable and easiest proof, therefore, of the reality of an All-Sufficient, Infinitely Benevolent and Infinitely Wise Being, something which is acknowledged as a result of contemplating the excellent arrangements which the world everywhere displays, is undermined by Leibniz's system (*Refl*,17:238).

However, it is still worthwhile highlighting two points. The first is perhaps so self-evident that it could be easily ignored. Without a *theos*, there is no theodicy. The second is the status of the *theos*; has its existence been the subject of an antecedent proof, or is it the object of a belief,

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<sup>26</sup> Hereafter *Only Possible Argument*.

or weaker still an assumption? For Leibniz it is the first case, but here Kant seems to be associating himself with either the second or third case. In turn, this gives rise to the serious error which Kant sees, namely that if one starts from only a belief or assumption that God exists, one can indeed argue that the evils which result from *disorders* in the world are unavoidable for God in creation. However, one cannot simultaneously reverse the argument and argue from the perceived *order* in the world to God's existence. It is the latter that Kant argues undermines Leibniz's system, or as Robert Theis puts it: 'at the end of the day, the metaphysico-theological project of Leibniz lacks unity' (2009,161), holding that Kant saw that there was no connection of Leibniz's proof of God's existence in the *Monadology* and his notion of the best possible world. However, it is only the proof from order in the world, the Physico-Theological proof, which is here undermined; the other two main proofs, the Ontological and the Cosmological, are not affected. Kant will eventually address this second error through deconstructing the problem. In the first *Critique* all theoretical proofs of God's existence, including the Physico-Theological, will be explicitly rejected with the result that it loses its power to undermine anything. However, in the first *Critique*, Kant remains attracted to the Physico-Theological proof (A623f/B651f) but then chiefly as an explanatory mechanism for the order in nature. Nevertheless, here Kant provides early indications of his concern for theodicy's success being predicated on any theoretical proof of God's existence.

Thus, the properties of God are placed in safety to the satisfaction of those who have enough understanding and sufficient submissiveness to applaud the metaphysical proofs of the Divine Existence. As for the rest of those who are willing to acknowledge that contemplating the world reveals traces of God – they remain troubled (*RefI*,17:233).

It is reasonable to place Kant amongst the troubled despite him stating that 'contemplating the world reveals traces of God'. Even so, at this stage in his philosophical career, Kant approves one proof, that of Pope. He states that 'Pope chooses a path which, when it comes to rendering the beautiful proof of God's existence accessible to everyone, is the best suited of all possible paths' (*RefI*,17:233). However, to my reading, in Pope's *Essay* there is no explicit proof of God's existence but rather an intimation that people come to God through Nature which is not dissimilar to the Physico-Theological proof that Kant regarded as undermined by Leibniz's best possible world.

If this was the only evidence available with which to assess Kant's stance on Leibniz's optimism, it would be reasonable to conclude that he firmly rejected it. However, the contrast with *Optimism* could not be more striking, as will soon become apparent. The prevailing view expressed in the secondary literature concerning *Optimism* is that Kant is setting out a defence of the Leibnizian best possible world. For instance, Josef Kremer (1909,161) holds that in the

work 'Kant is still a supporter of the Leibnizian optimism and defends the teaching of God's choice of the best possible world from among those possible'.<sup>27</sup> Loades (1985,110) concurs considering the work to be 'an unambiguous reaffirmation of Leibniz'. She adds that 'Kant seems by now to have chosen to rely entirely on Leibniz and largely to have abandoned allusions to Pope' because any value the latter might have depended on the former.

In *Optimism* Kant demonstrates to his satisfaction, carefully and at some length, three crucial propositions which are contained in the Leibnizian position on the best possible world.

- i. That there is a singular best possible world
- ii. That God would, acting from his nature, choose such a world, and
- iii. That our world is this Best Possible World.

However, one important reservation must be noted. Kant starts his essay with the phrase '[n]ow that an appropriate concept of God has been formed, if God chooses, he chooses only what is best' (*Opt*,2:29). But he does not describe this concept or state whether the concept is the subject of proof, belief, or just the opening premise of an argument. There is no doubt that *Optimism* proceeds from some prior stance on God's existence and is thus unchanged from the *Reflections* where Kant was equally unforthcoming on the subject of God's attributes. The second element of the citation concerning God's choice is also revealing as it shows that, here at least, part of the concept <God> is such a being chooses the best. This is strongly suggested by the following dismissive statement:

If anybody were so bold as to assert that the Supreme Wisdom could find the worse better than the best, or that the Supreme Goodness should prefer a lesser good to a greater, which was equally within its power, I should not waste my time in attempting a refutation (*Opt*,2:33)

This is confirmed a little later with:

Since God chose this world and this world alone of all the possible worlds of which He had cognition, He must for that very reason, have regarded it as the best. And since God's judgement never errs, it follows this world is also in fact the best (*Opt*,2:34).

The key weakness of the argumentation here, to my mind, is the premise above in which God is defined as, rather than shown to be, the type of entity that always chooses the best. This leaves any theodicy based on this argument on insecure foundations.

We should also note that Kant viewed Leibniz as believing that he had said nothing original 'when he [Leibniz] maintained that this world was the best of all possible worlds' (*Opt*,2:29). For Kant, what was new was Leibniz's using that principle to 'cut the knot, so difficult to untie, of all the difficulties relating to the origin of evil' (*Opt*,2:29). In other words, Leibniz was

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<sup>27</sup> my translation

employing the principle of the best possible world<sup>28</sup> to address what we now term the logical problem of evil<sup>29</sup>.

These reservations notwithstanding, there can be little doubt that in *Optimism* Kant is endorsing the Leibnizian system, from both a philosophical standpoint and a personal one. The relevant passages are those cited above and the following panegyric:

I am also happy to find myself a citizen of the world which could not possibly have been better than it is. Unworthy in myself but chosen for the sake of the whole by the best of all beings to be a humble member of the most perfect of all possible plans, I esteem my own existence the more highly, since I was elected to occupy a position in the best of schemes (*Opt*,2:34).

The challenge arising from the Reflections and *Optimism* is how can they be at all reconciled, between a rejection in 1754 and an endorsement just five years later? In my view, they cannot be. But, with the leeway we have allowed Kant in this exploratory period, we should not be overly concerned; certainly a charge of inconsistency would be premature and out of place. However, there are various arguments which can be presented in an effort to narrow but not eliminate the divide between the two sources.

Firstly, we have seen that the two serious problems which Kant signalled in *Reflection 3705* were rendered harmless by later development in his thought. However, even after making backdated allowance for this, at the time of the Reflections, Kant's position is a long way from an endorsement of Leibnizian theodicy. Secondly, when we look at the three propositions which Kant holds that he demonstrated in *Optimism*, it could be argued that all he has endorsed is the Best Possible World, not the theodicy based thereon. As we have seen, what Kant regarded as new with Leibniz was not the Best Possible World *per se* but its use to defend God's justice through his theodicy.

However, this is not enough for us to proceed to other topics. We must also look at how Kant viewed *Optimism* later in his career since we are concerned with the *development* of Kant's thought on theodicy. It would seem that Kant was embarrassed by *Optimism*. David Walford in his introduction to his translation of *Optimism* being used in this study cites Borowski, Kant's earliest biographer, as stating when he [Borowski] had enquired about the work:

Kant, with genuine solemn seriousness bade me think no more on optimism, urging me, should I ever come across it anywhere, not to let anyone have a copy but to withdraw it from circulation immediately (2002, lvi).

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<sup>28</sup> For example see §199/H251.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Tooley (2012) defines this 'as a purely deductive argument that attempts to show that there are certain facts about the evil in the world that are logically incompatible with the existence of God. One especially ambitious form of this...argument attempts to establish the very strong claim that it is logically impossible for it to be the case both that there is any evil at all, and that God exists'.

Borowski's testimony is important as his biography was read in sketch form by Kant, corrected in places by him, and approved in general (Kuehn,2001,10). This occurred in 1792 in the productive period some twelve years before Kant's death and so well before the period in which some scholars have speculated that he was slowly losing his mental powers due to Alzheimer's disease. Manuel Trevijano Etcheverria (1976, 168)<sup>30</sup> supports an "embarrassment" reading and offers a possible motivation for such a feeling on Kant's part. Etcheverria refers to *Optimism* as a 'work Kant hated because of its exacerbated Leibnizian tone and the acceptance of Leibniz's "best possible world"'. Ernst Cassirer (1918,59), on the other hand, dismisses the work as 'no more than a hastily composed, academic occasional piece' but he points us to another clue in a footnote. This is that in a letter to Johann Gotthelf Lindner dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 1759 (cf.10:19) Kant explains that his motivation for the work was to defend optimism against Crusius. Martin Schönfeld offers another possible motivation for Kant's embarrassment which is consistent with subsequent developments rather than just expressing a later dislike for *Optimism*.

Only five years after its composition, Kant would reject the *Optimism* essay and his own earlier defence of the Leibnizian concept of evil as the mere absence of good. (The claimed proportionality of reality, relative perfection, and goodness had implied evil is nothing) (2000,188).

Here Schönfeld is referring to the later work *Negative Magnitudes* which is indeed groundbreaking with respect to his taxonomy of evil. This work will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

In sum, the gap between Kant's views in the Reflections and those in *Optimism* has not been successfully bridged, but again, if my characterising Kant's pre-Critical period thought on theodicy as one of exploration is accepted, then closing the gap is not crucial. We will see later how Kant resolved these divergent early views.

## CHAPTER 2 - THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF EVIL

If theodicy consists in a reasoned explanation for the co-existence of evil and a God with the conventional moral and "omni-"properties, then without a clear understanding of the types of evil being addressed and equally, those not being addressed, any examination of would-be theodicies would not be productive. Accordingly, evil as Kant viewed it will be discussed twice in this study, once now, and then later in Part C dealing with his late-Critical period.

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<sup>30</sup> I wish to thank Dr. Maria Alvarez and my fellow student, Paola Romero, both of King's College, London for their kind assistance in the translation of key passages from Etcheverria's paper.

At first sight the title of this chapter suggests a plan of work. First, investigate where evil comes from and then second, set out what types of evil there are and their various attributes. However, such a neat logical division is difficult to maintain in practice, as even Kant found, because, in describing how a particular evil arose, one unavoidably gives a partial account of its nature. However, even if the two aspects are inextricably interwoven in such a manner it is still important to account for each and this is the aim of the chapter.

In the previous chapter it was shown that the context in which Kant began to consider theodicy was thoroughly Leibnizian. In view of that, a good place to start is a restatement of Leibniz's taxonomy of evil:

Evil may be taken metaphysically, physically and morally. *Metaphysical evil* consists in mere imperfection, *physical evil* in suffering and *moral evil* in sin. Now although physical evil and moral evil are not necessary, it is enough that by virtue of the eternal verities they may be possible (§21/H136).

It can be noted immediately that whilst physical and moral evil are not necessary, metaphysical evil is excluded from Leibniz's rider and thus, by implication, necessary. This is consistent with the then-prevailing view that evil was a result of creation's finitude. The act of creation involved God choosing to instantiate one world from amongst all those He contemplated. When one possible world is actualised, limitation inevitably results as some things which would have been possible in other worlds are now impossible in the instantiated one. To that extent, the created world is limited. Further, God is perfect goodness but what is created cannot equal God and so must contain less good. Hence it is imperfect in the sense meant by Leibniz (cf. §30/H141). These ideas are combined in identifying limitation as a shortfall in the good and, to the extent that it was less good, it was evil. And as this evil was *unavoidably* present in creation, it was regarded as metaphysical. An example drawn from the physical world may help to illustrate this notion of shortfall. Heat is a phenomenon of molecular movement; the hotter an object the more the movement. When we say something is cold, although in colloquial terms we think of <cold> as something, it is in fact nothing, being merely a way of saying that the cold object has less molecular movement than a hot object. In the same way as <cold>, a shortfall in goodness does not have a positive ontological status.

Leibniz's taxonomy names two further kinds of evil but, when it is asked what they consist in, his definition above can appear deceptively simple. Non-trivial issues soon arise. When God created, the laws of nature in what had been up to that point only a possible world became fixed and actual. This meant that they would operate in an identical manner under identical physical conditions. Should they be grouped under metaphysical evil in the Leibnizian

taxonomy and described as natural evil as advanced by Maria Rosa Antognazza (2014,122ff.)? Or should the sometimes injurious consequences for humans of the laws of nature be included in Leibnizian physical evil as argued by Busche (2013,249)? Second, how is the suffering which is the result of moral evil to be classified? Should it be included in physical evil or seen as the necessary consequence of moral evil and thus inseparable from it? Leibniz offers a partial answer when he includes in his category of suffering or physical evil that ‘one may say of physical evil, that God wills it often as a penalty owing to guilt’ (§23/H137).

Fortunately, these uncertainties do not have to be resolved in this study with respect to Leibniz’s taxonomy of evil, but they certainly have to be addressed in any taxonomy of evil advanced on Kant’s behalf. We should note, at once, that Kant did not explicitly set out a taxonomy of his own. Therefore, when his taxonomy is referred to, it is an implied one which I argue can be fairly derived from the pre-Critical works under consideration.

### ***The Laws of Nature and their Working***

Whilst Kant did not explicitly endorse the Leibnizian taxonomy, it was his understanding of this which provided the datum against which he set out his first thoughts on evil. Kant’s aim was to consider two fundamental questions arising from the Leibnizian taxonomy. First, was the undoubted suffering caused to humans arising from nature’s workings divine punishment for moral evil? Second, was it any form of evil at all? The major sources which will be mined to establish his position on these two key questions are *Universal Natural History and theory of the Heavens or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Whole Universe according to Newtonian Principles*<sup>31</sup> of 1755, the three Earthquake Essays of 1756 written in response to the Lisbon Earthquake, and the later pre-Critical work *Only Possible Argument* of 1763. This latter work, despite its title, contains much valuable material on the laws of nature and any possible departure therefrom by way of miracles.

That said, a brief reference to some earlier material is also helpful. Kant’s earliest statement on the laws of nature came as early as 1747 when he wrote in *Living Forces*<sup>32</sup> that ‘Leibniz believed that it was not proper for God’s power and wisdom that He should be necessitated to continually renew the motion which He had communicated to His creation<sup>33</sup> (LF,1:58) (my translation). This passage not only shows that Kant appreciated that Leibniz held that the laws

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<sup>31</sup> Hereafter *Universal Natural History*

<sup>32</sup> Full title *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, this citation continues ‘as Mr. Newton imagined’ which suggests that Kant understood one of the bones of contention between Leibniz and Clarke. The latter, a Newtonian, held to the idea of immediate sustainment by God of gravitational force. This is also remarked upon by Kant at 1:415 in *New Elucidation*. For a fuller account see Antognazza (2009,534-538).

of nature were continual in operation but also that he understood the Leibnizian position on how creation is maintained, itself an important matter to be taken up in detail later. Further, in the 1753/4 Reflections 3703-5, Kant made a comparison between Pope's and Leibniz's systems of optimism in which he agreed with both men on the uninterrupted operation of universal laws of nature. Firstly, Pope held that 'plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven's design' which clearly grants primacy to the uninterrupted working of unchanged laws of nature over any contingent harmful effects on human beings. Kant, moreover, saw that these laws 'are not placed in relation to each other by any forced union into a harmonious scheme [but] will adapt themselves as if spontaneously to the attainment of purposes which are perfect' (*Refl*,17:234). By 'forced union' I take Kant to mean some divine direct intervention. Rather, he is claiming that the result of this adaptation is still perfection which is consistent with Pope's 'whatever is, is right'. Secondly, Kant's agreement with Leibniz can be seen when the latter asks 'shall God, whose laws concern a good so universal that all of the world that is visible to us perchance enters into it as no more than a trifling accessory, be bound to depart from his laws, because they today displease the one and tomorrow the other?' (§205/H255). So an intermediate conclusion which can be reached is that Kant in his stance on the laws of nature was not so much charting a new direction rather than largely maintaining the stance on this topic by these two predecessors.

Of the major sources, *Universal Natural History* is the one where Kant establishes the required theoretical foundation for his eventual position<sup>34</sup>. The full title - *Universal Natural History and theory of the Heavens or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Whole Universe according to Newtonian Principles*— does not fully reveal Kant's overall aim for the work. In addition to the endorsement of Newtonian principles, there is a second major objective to be secured. This is that adopting these Newtonian principles must nonetheless still result in a place for God in Kant's overall description of the physical world. Kant will not accept a God reduced to just an originator and architect. This interpretation of *Universal Natural History's* aim is shared by Schöpfung who sees this work as characterised by Kant's effort to reconcile physics with a divinely inspired purpose holding that Kant '[u]nwilling to accept a deterministic world-machine without provisions...had to articulate new accounts of purpose, freedom, and God that would supplement and qualify the Newtonian model of nature' (2000,96). One does not have to look far for confirmation. In the Preface to *Universal Natural History*, Kant makes it clear that the work must not be set in a purely materialistic context but rather in one set by God's act of creation:

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<sup>34</sup> Although Kant's Newtonian conversion could be held to date from 1754 and the 'spin cycle' essay where he acknowledged the explanatory power of Newton's laws.



If the universal laws of causation of matter are also a result of the highest plan, then they can presumably have no purpose other than that which strives to fulfil of their own accord that plan which the highest wisdom has set itself (*UNH*,1:223).

Another noteworthy aspect of the work is that all three parts have an epigraph drawn from Pope's *Essay on Man*. In examining Reflections 3703-5 we have already seen the importance of this work to Kant and its later citation shows that the impression which it made on him was not a passing one. The example heading Part One reinforces the above remarks regarding the work's aim with respect to God:

- . Is the great chain that draws all to agree,
- . And drawn supports, upheld by God or thee? (*UNH*,1:241)<sup>35</sup>

In other words, the system of universal laws which Kant calls upon is maintained by God<sup>36</sup>. This identity of views with Pope is reinforced again near the end of Kant's work when he includes the following with its reference to the *Kette der Natur*- the chain of nature, the *nexus rerum*:

- . What a chain, which from God its beginning takes, what natures,
- . From heavenly and earthly [natures], from angels [and] humans down to animals
- . From seraphim to the worm! O distance that eye can never,
- . Attain and contemplate,
- . From the Infinite to you, from you to nought! (*UNH*,1:365)

In this endorsement by Kant, man's non-centrality in creation, an important component of his stance on nature's workings, is yet again emphasised. Man could only justly complain about these workings if he was creation's centrepiece in the physical sense but this is not the case. We can note that Kant again considers the chain of nature in the second part of the late-Critical *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgement, where he deals with man as creation's telic centrepiece but in a moral not a physical sense.

Intriguingly, Kant recommends his readers to start at Chapter Eight of *Universal Natural History*. We shall do the same. It might seem an odd place were it not for the fact that the theologically and theodically important material is to be found there. In my view, that Kant directed his readers there offers further support to the claim that he strove to set the laws of nature in a divine context. The foregoing considerations all point towards the essential role that Kant saw as still reserved for God and Chapter Eight's opening provides an unequivocal statement of this.

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<sup>35</sup> Eric Watkins in his notes to the 2012 translation of the *Universal Natural History* points out that the quotations which Kant included (in German) came from a rather free translation of Pope's *Essay on Man* by a certain Brockes. These have been retranslated back into English by Olaf Reinhardt. The original English texts are included in Watkins' notes.

<sup>36</sup> We shall see, however, that Kant did not support the idea that God's maintenance was by continuous action or *ad hoc* interventions.

One cannot look at the universe without recognising the most excellent order in its arrangement and the sure characteristics of the hand of God in the perfection of its relations. Reason, having considered and admired so much beauty, so much excellence, is rightly incensed at the bold foolishness that has the audacity to attribute all this to coincidence and fortuitous chance. The highest wisdom must have made the design and an infinite power carried it out, otherwise it would be impossible that so many intentions that come together for one purpose could be encountered in the constitution of the universe (*UNH*,1:331).

From the above the key elements of Kant's position can be readily seen. They are that (i) the observed order in the world comes from God (the highest wisdom)<sup>37</sup>, (ii) this order is not a happenstance, (iii) the most significant aspect of the observed order lies not in the order displayed by various individual phenomena but in their *systematic unity*. Kant had already highlighted this aspect in Reflection 3704 and he does so again later in *Only Possible Argument* (1763) where he writes:

Everything which is produced by nature, in so far as it tends towards harmoniousness, order and usefulness, agrees, it is true, with God's purposes. But it also displays the characteristic of having originated from universal laws. The effects of such universal laws extend far beyond any such individual case. (*OPA*,2:143)

Together, in the foregoing Kant lists three possibilities for the order in creation, (i) blind chance, (ii) God continuously and directly intervenes in a series of ad hoc miracles with the underlying purpose of ensuring order in the world, (iii) God provides for the universal laws of nature which then act to supply the detail. He dismisses (i) just as he did previously in *Optimism* (cf.*Opt*,2:29) but questions whether it is (ii) or (iii) which applies. Kant thinks that philosophers in general have a prejudice against (iii) since it appears that it 'would be disputing God's governance of the world' (cf.*UNH*,1:332), not only equating it with blind chance but also challenging God's omnipotence. Nevertheless, Kant is quite clear; it is (iii) and not (ii) which applies. Again, it must be emphasised that Kant is not arguing from the ordered design to be found in individual creatures but for the coherence of the total system of nature<sup>38</sup>. He holds that the laws of nature do not each have an individual necessity 'but rather that they must have their origin in a single understanding as the ground and source of all beings' (*UNH*,1:333).

The lasting scientific contribution of *Universal Natural History* is Kant's demonstration, using only Newtonian principles and relatively thin observational data, how an original cosmic nebula of dust could form itself into the physical world we know today and he clearly sets out his aim in this regard:

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<sup>37</sup> An interesting reversal of the physico-theological proof of God's existence which argues from order to God. The simultaneous adoption of both arguments was one of the two serious problems signalled by Kant in Reflection 3705.

<sup>38</sup> A logical parallel with Leibniz's argument for the Best Possible World can be drawn. Leibniz was not arguing that each individual aspect of the world was the best possible but rather that the world as *total system* is such.

[T]hen I hope to found a sure conviction on incontrovertible grounds: **that the world recognises a mechanical development out of the universal laws of nature as the origin of its constitution** (Kant's emphasis in bold) (*UNH*,1:334).

He proceeds to show, using Newton's laws, how the planets in our solar system and galaxies were formed and even how apparent irregularities such as comets can be accounted for. However, this impressive scientific detail does not directly concern us here and sadly must be passed over for the present. What is relevant from the account is that Kant considered that he had shown that not only was there order in the world but also that that order did *not* result from God's *direct* action. Also important here are certain elements of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. This covered many topics including God's nature and that of time and space, but the aspect pivotal to our enquiry is this same issue, namely the nature of God's maintenance of the world. Leibniz positions the issue in his first paper (L1:4)<sup>39</sup>.

Sir Isaac Newton, and his followers<sup>40</sup>, have also a very odd opinion concerning the work of God. According to their doctrine, God Almighty wants to wind up his watch from time to time: otherwise it would cease to move...[God] must consequently be so much the more unskilful a workman, as he is oftener obliged to mend his work and set it right.

In other words, in Leibniz's eyes, the Newtonians' claim undermined God's perfection and/or His omnipotence with their implication that He did not do the job properly in the first place. Clarke rejected this accusation with:

[H]e [God] not only composes or puts things together, but is himself the author and continual preserver of their original forces and moving powers: and consequently 'tis not a diminution, but the true glory of his workmanship, that nothing is done without his **continual** government and inspection. (my emphasis in bold).

From these citations, two distinct positions concerning God's possible role can be distinguished. In the first position, helpfully described as 'divine operational presence' by Ezio Vailati (1997,18), God intervenes in the world – the "hands-on" chief executive as it were. This is the Newtonian position. The second position, again borrowing from Vailati and described by him as 'divine situational presence', is where God is the world's conserver, removed from "day-to-day" management but retaining a benevolent supervisory watch on His creation. This is the Leibnizian position. However, whilst this differentiation is interesting, what is paramount for us is the position adopted by Kant.

Kant holds that at a certain point Newton gave up on explanation and referred to God's direct will (cf.*UNH*,1:339). Kant does not and considers that that laws of nature as described by Newton are sufficient to explain all the workings of the heavens, even the apparently

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<sup>39</sup> References given in this form are to Leibniz paper:section, as presented in Alexander (1956)

<sup>40</sup> Including Samuel Clarke, Newton's representative and defender in the correspondence.

divergent ones. In that way Kant is a Leibnizian in this matter. Indeed, as L.W. Beck pithily puts it, Kant 'out-Newtoned' Newton (1969,431). Or in Loades' fuller version, 'by employing Newtonian physics Kant could eliminate appeal to the intervention of the deity where even the Newtonians had supposed it to be necessary' (1985,102).

From these considerations, two significant provisional conclusions applicable to theodicy can be drawn. Firstly, in arguing that the laws of nature can fully describe the workings of the cosmos, Kant has implicitly rejected the notion of God's *direct* actions causing physical harm. By implication too, he has at least downplayed miracles which would be ad hoc rather than constant intervention but still interference by God in the workings of the laws of nature which He has put in place. Secondly, Kant's considerations confirm that for him there is a God but He is no longer the on-going maintainer of the universe's detailed workings in the sense of continuous intervention. God is still recognised, nonetheless, as the creator of the pre-universal nebula upon which the laws of nature operated as Newton set out and Kant utilised in his account of how the universe was formed. This point is theodically significant because if God was eliminated from Kant's system by a purely naturalistic/materialistic account of the universe, then the need for a theodicy would also be eliminated. Moreover, God is not only the source of these laws of nature and their unified action but is also their conserving cause in the sense that He underwrites them and guarantees their continuity<sup>41</sup>. It is this which prevents Kant being accused of deism which is important for this study since this would have placed quite different demands on any attempted theodicy. For Kant that God is a 'situational' rather than an 'operational' presence (in Vailati's terminology) does not matter in terms of divine action; it is just a timing issue as he sets out in *Only Possible Argument*:

But consider: the supernatural is not thereby diminished; for whether it takes place gradually, at different times, the degree of the supernatural is no greater in the second case than it is in the first. The only difference between them relates not to the degree of the immediate divine action but merely to the *when* (OPA,2:115)

Notwithstanding the above, Kant is unequivocal that when the laws of nature are recognised as ordering nature in detail, the importance of, and the dependence on, God is in no way diminished. He states:

If therefore we become aware of arrangements in the constitution of the world that redound to the reciprocal advantage of creatures, we should not think it strange to attribute these to a natural consequence of the universal laws of nature, for what flows from these is not the result of blind chance or an irrational necessity: It is ultimately grounded in the highest wisdom from which the universal characteristics take their correspondences. One conclusion is quite correct: If order and beauty shine forth in the constitution of the world, then there is a God. However, the other is

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<sup>41</sup> Kant reiterates this point at OPA,2:115.

grounded no less: If this order was able to flow from universal laws of nature, then all of nature is necessarily an effect of the highest wisdom (UNH,1:346).

If *Universal Natural History* is where Kant established the theory, then it is the Earthquake Essays where he puts it into practice. In 1756 Kant wrote three essays in response to the 1755 Lisbon earthquake which not only shook Portugal physically but which also, intellectually, made European thought on God and evil rock on its foundations. At our distance in time from this event and with a very different *Weltanschauung*, it is easy to underestimate the significance of the Lisbon earthquake, occurring as it did in the great capital of a world-wide Christian empire. But it was as profound a challenge to the moral philosophy of Kant's day as Auschwitz is to ours. In particular, it threatened to undermine optimism as it was expressed in Leibniz's *Theodicy*<sup>42</sup> and reinforce the views of those who saw such calamities as divine punishment. These three short essays were Kant's immediate response. The essays are largely given over to geophysical speculation about the causes of earthquakes which although scientifically intriguing does not concern us here. Again, Schönfeld provides a succinct summary with which to position the essays:

The three papers [the earthquake essays] revealed that he [Kant] was more interested in the scientific side of the event, in the question how it happened, than in the metaphysical problem of why it happened. He had already asserted in the *Universal Natural History* that the cosmic evolution of nature towards self-perfection may involve local destructions. Hence, the Lisbon earthquake did not challenge his cosmogony in the same way as it did Leibniz's theodicy (2000,75).

Our consideration here will be limited to just the second essay<sup>43</sup> as it contains the majority of the relevant material. Still, this essay is largely given over to much expanded geophysical speculation of the sort put forward in the first essay. But there are passages which are highly germane to this study and in which Kant ponders whether such natural disasters are evil. One passage concerns the laws of nature which are regular in their working and that all the unpleasant consequences thereof are natural:

Even the terrible instruments by which disaster is visited on mankind, the shattering of countries, the fury of the sea shaken to its foundations, the fire-spewing mountains<sup>44</sup>, invite man's contemplation, and are planted in nature by God as a proper consequence of fixed laws (EE2,1:431).

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<sup>42</sup> Again this relied on misunderstanding Leibniz's theodicy as an *a posteriori* argument from the alleged evil of the earthquake, not on an *a priori* one which tried to account for evil *in general* in the world.

<sup>43</sup> History and Natural Description of the Most Exceptional Occurrences of the Earthquakes which shook a large part of the Earth at the end of 1755

<sup>44</sup> Lisbon had indeed suffered earthquake, tsunamis, and fire on All Saints Day 1755

Another passage concerns our unwarranted assumptions about man's physical centrality in creation, that the world should be arranged for our comfort, and the sense that we have somehow been falsely wronged:

[T]hereby, it humbles humanity in that it allows it to see that it has no right...to expect from the laws of nature that God has ordered purely agreeable consequences, and it probably teaches also in this manner to see: that this playground of his desires should not contain the objective of all his [God's] intentions<sup>45</sup> (EE2,1:431).

Two significant points stand out here. Firstly, we can see that Kant considers that man cannot expect to avoid deleterious consequences from the workings of nature's laws. Secondly, Kant states that man and this earth being 'the playground of his desires' is not the sole objective in God's plan in creation. Neither point is new; we have seen these already made, once in Reflections 3703-5 where Kant found that both Leibniz and Pope expressed themselves in a similar manner, and again in the discussion of *Universal Natural History* above.

Most significantly, in the *Schlußbetrachtung*<sup>46</sup> of this second essay Kant, for the first but not the only time, breaks any possible link between moral and physical evil when he maintains that the latter is not a punishment for the former, stating:

One offends completely against this [our love for our fellow man in his misery], however, when one at any time regards such fate as imposed punishment that will hit the concerned cities for their evil deeds and when we view these misfortunes as the goal of the avenging God as his justice that flows over all (EE2,1:459).

The passage also suggests that not only do we wrong our neighbour when we accuse him of moral evil on the evidence of the physical evil he experiences, but we also offend against God's justice. We will see Kant strongly reinforce this point later in his treatment of Job's troubles in *Failure*. In addition to breaking the link between moral and physical evil, Kant goes further and sees that in addition to any attempt to make or maintain the link being wrong, it is presumptuous on man's part since it depends on a claimed insight into God's ways (cf. EE2,1:459-60). This is another key issue for Kant on Job in *Failure* where he will dismiss all attempts at philosophical theodicy using the same principle.

When we look to *Only Possible Argument* we find that Kant is confirming the stance which he adopted in this second Earthquake Essay, namely that those events which could be termed natural evil are not evil at all but just the consequences of the laws of nature, Kant stating:

Furthermore, the occurrence of these events [destructive forces] from time to time is sufficiently grounded in the constitution of nature, according to a universal law. But the vices

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<sup>45</sup> Except where stated otherwise all translations in the treatment of the earthquake essays are mine

<sup>46</sup> Final consideration

and moral corruption of human race are not *natural* grounds connected with these events, nor are they to be numbered among the laws in accordance with which they take place... And that attribution implies that the event in question was a misfortune, not a punishment: man's moral conduct cannot be a cause of earthquakes according to natural law, for there is no connection here between the cause and the effect (*OPA*,2:104).

Moreover in this passage, and explicitly for the first time, Kant is stating that there is nothing lawlike about moral evil. Moral infringement does not result from some form of natural moral law in the same non-contingent manner in which physical events flow from the laws of nature. In doing this he is decisively distancing himself from Pope's 'whatever is, is right' including the evil of a Borgia with which he may have toyed earlier in Reflection 3704.

Although Kant's position on miracles, namely at least downplaying if not rejecting them outright, could be reasonably extrapolated from his views on the laws of nature in *Universal Natural History* and the Earthquake Essays, in *Only Possible Argument* he provides us with explicit evidence for this in which he differentiates between natural and supernatural events. He holds that there are two necessary requirements for an event to be considered natural:

The first requirement for this is that the force of nature should be the efficient cause of the thing [event]; the second requirement is that the manner in which the force of nature is directed to the production of this effect should itself be sufficiently grounded in a rule of the natural laws of causality (*OPA*,2:103).

Anything that does not meet both requirements Kant holds to be supernatural and thus a miracle but he usefully distinguishes between two cases of the supernatural. Firstly, those cases where the efficient cause is completely external to nature he terms 'materially supernatural'. Secondly, those cases where 'the forces of nature are directed to producing the effect is not itself subject to a rule of nature' (*OPA*,2:104), Kant terms 'formally supernatural'. In other words, in the first case God would be causing a miracle which was completely at odds with the laws of nature which He has put in place and in the second He would be intervening to direct the forces of nature to realise a desired end (cf. *OPA*,2:105). The latter is closer to the case seen by those who held that divine physical punishment occurred in response to moral evil. Namely, that they did not question that earthquakes or typhoons were natural events but these were somehow directed by God and targeted the morally guilty.

Now if Kant were to acknowledge that God acted in either a materially or formally supernatural manner, he would be arguing against three firm views which are essential features of the position he established with respect to the laws of nature which God has put in place; (i) that God does not need to wind up creation's clock (contra Newton but not Leibniz) (ii) that the laws of nature are universal and continuous in operation (in agreement with Leibniz and Pope) and (iii) that natural harm is not a divine punishment for moral evil. Whilst

Kant did not and indeed could not explicitly argue for miracles' impossibility, to nevertheless allow a place for them in his system and thus rejecting the three views above would require a *volte-face* totally out of character. To allow miracles but still to remain subscribed to these three views would be inconsistent. Neither accusation is levelled at Kant here especially as Kant provides the following explicit statement of his position:

Where nature operates in accordance with necessary laws, there will be no need for God to correct the course of events by direct intervention; for, in virtue of the necessity of the effects which occur in accordance with the order of nature, that which is displeasing to God cannot occur, not even in accordance with the most universal laws (*OPA*,2:110).

Kant also links miracles' inadmissibility with the notion of a best possible world when he states that '[i]ndeed, I should find it amazing if anything occurred or could occur in the course of nature in accordance with general laws which was displeasing to God, or in need of a miracle to improve it' (*OPA*,2:115). From this flows an interesting corollary to Kant's stance. Because Kant sees that God does not directly intervene in the world, it puts the onus on Him to select, at the outset, that world where the laws of nature yield the most perfect result possible. Anything less would be inconsistent with God's own perfection, a position taken by Kant. In consequence, divine non-interventionism adds weight to the case that this world is the best possible.

When the evidence from *Universal Natural History*, the second Earthquake Essay, and *Only Possible Argument* is weighed, two far-reaching moves can be seen which also act to remove, in Kant's case, some of the uncertainties noted above with respect to Leibniz's taxonomy. Firstly, the contingent deleterious effects on human beings flowing from the workings of the laws of nature in earthquakes, typhoons and similar cannot be described as any form of evil. This is not to deny that suffering, often grievous, occurs in the wake of such natural disasters but evil it is not. In this way, it does not matter for Kant whether such events are a component of metaphysical evil arising from the limitations inherent in creation or are an element in what Leibniz terms physical evil. It is simply natural harm. Kant recognises that evil and harm are different, although we must jump forward temporarily to Kant's late-Critical period and his *Critique of Practical Reason* (*CPR*,5:59-60) to find explicit confirmation. In the second *Critique* Kant states that '[t]he German language has the good fortune to possess expressions which do not allow this difference to be overlooked'. Specifically whereas Latin has the one word *malum* (and English too – evil), German has two words - *Böse* and *Übel* and Kant uses these words with precision (which will be seen to be of relevance later in *Failure*). *Böse* means "evil" and *Übel* "ill-being" or "woe" which is consistent with the term "harm" being advanced here. Although in the second *Critique* Kant is primarily concerned with moral issues, the



differentiation which he makes there is directly applicable to our considerations here. This can be seen when Kant confirms that the term evil does not apply to a person's physical state when he states:

Thus one may always laugh at the Stoic who in the most intense pains of gout cried out: Pain, however you torment me, I will never admit that you are something evil (*etwas Böses*); nevertheless, he was correct. He felt that the pain was an ill (*ein Übel*)...but he had no cause to grant that any evil attached to him because of it (*CPR*,5:60).

Secondly, because Kant has discounted God interfering with the laws of nature through miracles, physical evil cannot be a divine punishment for moral delinquency. In modern terms, it is not God's corrective or retributive justice. This is contra Leibniz at (§23/H137) as noted above. Moreover, Kant and Leibniz differed fundamentally on how possible divine punishment related to God's justice which both men saw as a fundamental moral attribute of God. It was suggested earlier in the chapter that at *EE*2,1:459 Kant saw divine punishment through physical suffering as offending against God's justice. In contrast, Leibniz, when confirming his stance on physical evil as punishment sees it as an unavoidable consequence of this same justice. He states:

It is therefore not God who is the cause of moral evil: but he is the cause of physical evil, that is, the punishment of moral evil. And this punishment, far from being incompatible with the supremely good principle, of necessity emanates from that one of its attributes, I mean its justice, which is not less essential to it than its goodness (§155/H220).

These two conclusions above, taken together, have a significant effect on any theodicy in a Kantian context. Now that the effects of the workings of the laws of nature which were previously described as either physical or natural evil are not evil at all, there is less evil which any would-be theodicy has to rationally reconcile with God's moral attributes. Further, now that physical evil does not signify divine punishment, there is no need to account for the miracles which would otherwise have been needed to deliver such an effect.

It is useful to take stock at this point and take a brief look back at Leibniz's taxonomy of evil to see what remains to be accounted for in that which will be put forward on Kant's behalf. When this is done there are three aspects which Kant has not (yet) addressed (i) evil as limitation (ii) the suffering that results from moral evil and (iii) moral evil itself. That Kant addresses (i) and (iii) will be seen in the consideration of *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes in Philosophy*<sup>47</sup> (1763) which follows.

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<sup>47</sup> Hereafter *Negative Magnitudes*

### ***Negative Magnitudes and the Nature of Evil***

*Negative Magnitudes* is the second major work with direct relevance to any taxonomy of evil which can be ascribed to the pre-Critical Kant. Given the pivotal importance which I judge the work to have in the development of Kant's thought on evil, a brief review of its standing in the literature is worthwhile. It is surprisingly little considered. Here I am agreeing with Melissa Zinkin who states in her paper 'Kant on Negative Magnitudes' that the work 'is one of the least frequently discussed of all his [Kant's] pre-critical writings' (2012,397)<sup>48</sup>. However, Zinkin's paper, after a short exposition of Kant's early views on negative magnitudes, concentrates on the metaphysical aspects of the work as she is principally concerned to show how some of Kant's metaphysical views in *Negative Magnitudes* were carried forward into his Critical philosophy. Similar approaches, investigating only the metaphysical implications, were taken both by Christian Kanzian in his 1993 paper 'Kant und Crusius' and Robert Schnepf in his 2001 paper 'Metaphysik oder Metaphysikritik'. To date, I have found little consideration of the work's moral philosophical impact, including in Andrew Chignell's recent (2009 and 2012) papers which touch on *Negative Magnitudes*.

However, if *Negative Magnitudes* suffers from a lack of consideration in modern scholarship then, in the past, it clearly made an impact on at least one famous philosopher. Eva Engel brings this to our attention in her paper 'Mendelssohn contra Kant' in which she draws attention to the work's significance for the former. She states that '[i]n April 1764 Mendelssohn had, at the end of his discussion of space-time, put Kant's term [negative magnitudes] under the public spotlight and indicated the wish that this spectacular development continued' (2004,270).<sup>49</sup> Engel also offers textual support from Mendelssohn himself in support of her stance including:

The difference, that he [Kant] makes...in the intention of the *compossibilitatis realitatum* in God between the logical and the real repugnance, seems grounded, and worthy of closer examination by the philosophical reader and an application to be recommended.

I maintain that arising from such closer examination, in applying the underlying principle of *Negative Magnitudes*, Kant's stance on evil underwent far-reaching change. It changed from the view that evil is solely a shortfall in the good (evil arising from limitation) to one where two types of evil were admitted. Whilst Kant continued to see some evil as arising from limitation, there was also now a type of evil which was ontologically real. In the Preface to *Negative*

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<sup>48</sup> A search of both *Kant-Studien* and *Kantian Review* yields only one paper with "Negative Magnitudes" in its title, that of Zinkin.

<sup>49</sup> All translations from German, with the exception of those from primary texts, are mine except where stated otherwise.

*Magnitudes* Kant explains that it is his intention to ‘consider a concept which is familiar enough in mathematics but which is still very unfamiliar in philosophy; and I wish to consider this concept in relation to philosophy itself’ (NM,2:169) before setting out the underlying principle on which his thesis was based:

For negative magnitudes are not negations of magnitudes, as the similarity of the expressions has suggested, but something truly positive in itself, albeit something opposed to the positive magnitude. And thus negative attraction is not rest, as *Crusius* supposed, but genuine repulsion (NM,2:169)

Kant then identifies two types of opposition which, in his view, had not been differentiated between by philosophers to date. Firstly, there is logical opposition upon which ‘attention has been exclusively and uniquely concentrated until now’ (NM,2:171).<sup>50</sup> Logical opposition ‘consists in the fact that something is simultaneously affirmed and denied of the very same thing. The consequence of the logical conjunction is *nothing at all (nihil negativum irrepresentabile)*’. Secondly there is real opposition which is ‘two predicates of a thing are opposed to each other, but not through the law of contradiction. Here one thing is cancelled by another, but the consequence is *something*’ (NM,2:171). In this way Kant is presenting us with two quite different concepts. The first is the nothing of incoherence, is it literally “no thing”, whilst the second is equilibrium from cancelling equal and opposites but still a *something*.

He then assigns an algebraic values and names to logical opposition calling the result of logical opposition ‘nothing: zero = 0; its meaning is negation, lack, absence’ (NM,2:172). With respect to real opposition he states that ‘no magnitude can be called absolutely negative: ‘+a’ and ‘-a’ must each be called the negative magnitude of the other’ (NM,2:174). In other words, Kant is asserting that ontologically negative things don’t exist. Opposites are real and are only prefixed with a plus sign or a minus sign by mathematical convention. Putting these two notions together, an example would be that a lack of pleasure (0) is not the opposite of pleasure (p); that is displeasure (-p), or in Kant’s words, ‘displeasure is accordingly not simply a lack, [but] a positive sensation ...which, wholly or partly, cancels the pleasure which arises from another ground’ (NM,2:182). These considerations allow Kant to set out two fundamental rules[s], the first being:

A real repugnancy only occurs where there are two things, as *positive grounds*, and where one of them cancels the consequence of the other (NM,2:175).

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<sup>50</sup> Zinkin (2012,397) concurs seeing it as ‘a criticism of rationalist logic, which only includes logical opposition’.

However, he adds the caveat that ‘determinations which conflict with each other must exist in the same subject’. It is helpful to take up Kant’s example of a ship sailing westward from Portugal to Brazil against an east-going current. If west-going movement is denoted by ‘+’ and east-going by ‘-’, then in his example the net movement for the week is by  $+12+7-3-5+8 = 19$  miles. The ship’s movement through the water westwards was 27 miles but this was reduced by the water moving eastwards 8 miles. The movement west and east have been denoted plus and minus respectively but there is nothing inherently positive about moving west or negative about moving east. Both movements are ontologically real with a positive ground. Again, we are only assigning a plus or a minus sign to them by mathematical convention. However, the wind and the current do not oppose each other<sup>51</sup>; they only do so through a third thing, the ship ‘the same subject’.

Let us expand Kant’s example a little to bring out the point which he is keen to emphasise. Suppose that ship’s movements were  $+12+7+8-13-5-9$  miles. The net movement would now be zero. Kant terms this *equilibrium* but it is still a *something* in Kant’s view. This contrasts with the situation where no forces are acting upon it and the ship is at *rest*. The net effect is the same but the explanation for the lack of movement is quite different. We will see later that Kant applies this consideration to moral actions/inactions and when he does so it is theodically important.

The second fundamental rule which Kant sets out in this matter:

is really the reverse of the first...whenever there is a positive ground and the consequence is nonetheless zero then there is real opposition. In other words: this ground is connected with another positive ground (NM,2:177).

Or, in other words, ‘the cancellation of a positive ground always demands a positive ground as well’ (NM,2:177). This implies also that in a state of equilibrium if only one ground is known, it is incumbent on us to search for the second. An example from the physical world is that if we only knew about gravitational attraction, we would be searching for another force to explain why the earth is in a stable heliocentric orbit<sup>52</sup>. However, the most significant statement of the first part of the treatise is made almost at its end where Kant gives his definition of terms which feature prominently in his predecessors’ taxonomies of evil<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> Ignoring minor frictional surface effects.

<sup>52</sup> Of course, this second force is known to us as centrifugal force.

<sup>53</sup> A full and instructive history of the terminology in the taxonomies of evil is given in Antognazza (2014,115ff.)

A negation, in so far as it is the consequence of a real opposition [*Realrepugnanz*], will be designated *deprivation*<sup>54</sup> (*privatio*). But any negation, in so far as it does not arise from this type of repugnancy will be called a *lack*<sup>55</sup> (*defectus, absentia*) (NM,2:177).

Thus, a negation arising from a real opposition is termed a *privatio*. This is the term which had been used by Kant's predecessors to indicate that some attribute is missing from an entity the concept of which normally contains the missing attribute. To my mind, Kant is using the term in the same way. This is indicated by his using the German word "*Beraubung*", here translated as "deprivation". This is helpful as the word is derived from "*rauben*" – "to rob". The entity has been "robbed" of something that is proper to it. An example would be a human being without legs since the concept <human being> contains the possession of legs. In other words, it describes something which is incorrectly absent, namely, a part which should be found in a realised entity corresponding to the concept but which is missing. It is worth emphasising here that Kant is quite clear here that, when he is talking about a real opposition, there must be two things in opposition, each with '*positive grounds*...where one of them cancels the consequence of the other' (NM,2:175) The two grounds are the natural presence of legs which can be assigned a positive value and the having no legs as a result of amputation or mutation can be assigned a negative value. The result is no legs but the privation is still *something* on Kant's terms. We will see later that, when he applies *Realrepugnanz* to the moral matters which concern us, we also discover an opposition.

With the other form of negation, which for Kant can only be a logical opposition, he is less helpful calling it amongst other things a lack or a defect. In everyday language this can also suggest that some attribute is missing from an entity which is proper to its concept. Here the German word which Kant uses "*Mangel*" does not help either since this denotes a lack, defect or fault. The last word which Kant uses is *absentia* – an absence and this is more fitting as it agrees better with his designation of a logical opposition as *nothing at all* or zero: =0 or, more generally, what is correctly absent. An example would be a fish without legs, the latter being no part of the concept <fish>. However, there is still scope for terminological confusion as the absence of an attribute not part of the concept of an entity is called a *negatio* by others yet Kant has used "negation" to describe both forms of opposition. In an attempt to avoid equivocation, it is my intention where possible to use Kant's third word, *absentia*<sup>56</sup>.

Having laid the terminological foundation, Kant makes the far-reaching move alluded to earlier:

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<sup>54</sup> *Beraubung*

<sup>55</sup> *Mangel*

<sup>56</sup> Except when citing Kant when the original will be retained with *absentia* added in square parentheses.

The error into which many philosophers<sup>57</sup> have fallen as a result of neglecting this truth is obvious. One finds that they generally treat evils as if they were mere negations<sup>58</sup>, even though it is obvious from our explanations that there are evils of lack (*mala defectus*) [*absentia*] and evils of deprivation (*mala privationis*). Evils of lack are negations [*absentia*]: there is no ground for the positing of what is opposed to them. Evils of deprivation presuppose that there are positive grounds which cancel the good for which there really exists another ground. Such evils of deprivation are *negative* goods. (NM,2:182).

A fundamental change has occurred. In contrast to regarding evil purely as a lack of good, we now have incontrovertible evidence that Kant now recognises *two* distinct types of evil. In addition, he makes two further points which merit attention. Firstly, that *mala defectus* (*absentia*) can nevertheless still be evil. Secondly, this opens the way for Kant to differentiate between the traditional religious terms “sins of omission” (*absentia*) and “sins of commission” (*privatio*). Kant supports this differentiation with the example of not giving to a person in need whom one has a moral duty to help (*absentia*) in contrast to robbing the person (*privatio*). They are both evils differing only in degree. In other words, man is driven by inner moral feeling and thus conscious of his inner moral duty and so a sin of omission is not zero in Kant’s view but still a negative only differing in magnitude from a sin of commission which Kant captures as ‘[a]ccordingly, sins of commission and sins of omission do not differ *morally* from each other in kind, but only in *magnitude*’ (NM,2:183).

At this point one could object that the mathematical/physical analogy which Kant has employed to develop his notion of evil with a negative magnitude but a positive ground is breaking down. He is now saying that an *absentia*, a lack, is not really zero on the scale of evil as he does at NM,2:172 but a lesser negative. In my view, this results from the inability of the analogy to differentiate mathematically between an *absentia* and the equilibrium resulting from two equal and opposite forces. To resolve this difficulty, at least partially, it is helpful to jump forward to *Religion* (Rel,6:22n) where Kant restates his argument from *Negative Magnitudes*. He makes it clear that the zero of inaction results not from no forces acting but the good and bad working against each other. In the case of sins of both commission and omission, the evil outweighs the good. However, if Kant is regarded not as putting forward a strict mathematical proof but rather employing a most effective heuristic device, his claim of the existence an ontologically positive evil can still be accepted. The result is still the same, namely that there are now two types of evil, moral evil and metaphysical evil conceived as limitation.

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<sup>57</sup> It is unhelpful that Kant does not specify who these philosophers are that he has in mind. Antognazza (2014,115ff.) has shown that the position of Kant’s predecessors is much more nuanced and that the use of identical terms by them is far from unequivocal.

<sup>58</sup> Kant reinforces this point when he states ‘Vice (*demeritum*) is not merely a negation; it is a negative virtue (*meritum negativum*)’. (NM,2:182)

In this conclusion I am agreeing with Heinz Heimsoeth who states in his paper, 'Zum Kosmotheologischen Ursprung der Kantischen Freiheitsantinomie'<sup>59</sup>, that:

In *Negative Magnitudes* Kant first introduced the idea of the "Realrepugnanz" and, from the mathematical and natural sciences, also has extended it to the psychological (with later expression: on the data of the "inner sense"). And then the principle here is also still applied to the contrast of good and evil - contrary to all views that "iniquity" might be mere privation<sup>60</sup>. (1966,227).

In other words, in Kant's view, our considerations to do good or evil are governed, just like the ship on its way to Brazil, by resolving two opposing forces, whilst noting, with respect to mental activity, "force" is being used figuratively. In my view, there is no doubt that that this is Kant's substantive position since he sets out this same argument of opposition explicitly applied to good and evil once more in the late-Critical *Religion* of 1791 (cf. *Rel*,6:22n). Also, in that later work, Kant will introduce the notions of a 'propensity to evil' and a 'pre-disposition to the good' and whilst Kant's treatment of these notions goes much deeper, fundamentally they are two opposing "forces". Often we experience tension between doing the right thing and the wrong thing and this lends informal, anecdotal support to Kant's thesis. Just as in the case of the earth's orbit mentioned earlier, when we know that we should do the good thing and yet do nothing, there must be another "force" restraining us, the bad thing. Further support for the concept of *Realrepugnanz* applied to morality can be drawn from *Failure* where Kant opposes God's holiness as law-giver with moral evil, God's goodness opposes the physically counter-purposive, and God's justice opposes the disproportion in the world between evil and punishment. A purist might object that this breaks Kant's stricture that the opposition must occur in the same third object and that here divine properties are being compared with human or natural ones. A counter would be that they do indeed occur in a common third object, the world. That support comes from *Religion* and *Failure* is noteworthy since these are late-Critical works. This shows that despite my characterisation of Kant's pre-Critical period as generally one of exploration, here, I contend, we have a lasting, career-long, change.

So with *Negative Magnitudes*, Kant's notion of evil underwent a radical change, moving from something which was not only that which is inherent in human beings due to their createdness but additionally something real to be done or not done. This conclusion is shared by Schönfeld.

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<sup>59</sup> On the cosmo-theological origin of the Kantian antinomy of freedom

<sup>60</sup> Heimsoeth's use of the word "privation" does not agree with that set out by Kant. Here it is being used in the sense of *absentia*. This illustrates the lack of standardised definitions in the literature for key terms used when describing evil which can easily derail debate on this topic.

We have already seen in Chapter 1 that he offered another possible motivation for Kant's embarrassment about *Optimism* but one which was consistent with later developments rather than merely expressing a later dislike:

Only five years after its composition, Kant would reject the *Optimism* essay and his own earlier defence of the Leibnizian concept of evil as the mere absence of good. (The claimed proportionality of reality, relative perfection, and goodness had implied evil is nothing) (2000,188).

The later development to which Schönfeld is referring here is *Negative Magnitudes*. The implications for any attempted theodicy are significant. When evil was seen solely as a limitation of creation it was possible to argue that evil was not of man's choosing but inherent in the created world and thus God was responsible for the introduction of evil through the act of creation. Now that evil can also be something ontologically real the way is clear for Kant to develop an account of human responsibility for evil through freedom. This could yet mean some responsibility on God's part but now of a different nature.

Having now considered all the available textual resources, it is a suitable point at which to take stock. The issues which had not been dealt with prior to considering *Negative Magnitudes* were (i) evil as limitation (ii) the suffering that results from much moral evil and (iii) moral evil itself. Concerning (i), at *NM*,2:182 Kant recognises its existence and accordingly it is fair to still include it in any taxonomy of evil we ascribe to him. With respect to (ii) he is silent and thus we have no guide whether to retain physical evil as a category now only containing the suffering which results from moral evil. The alternative would be to regard such suffering as integral to moral evil with both the evil act and the consequent suffering placed under the term "moral evil". To prevent this uncertainty being raised each time moral evil is discussed, I will adopt the latter case, namely as integral to moral evil, but only as a working hypothesis to allow this study to progress. With respect to (iii), Kant has not used the term "moral evil"<sup>61</sup>, but I hold that it can be used fairly on his behalf as a category since there are examples where he gives every indication of agreement with Leibniz. Supporting this, we saw that the latter terms moral evil as sin and that in *Negative Magnitudes*, when discussing evil, Kant refers to sins both of commission and omission. Elsewhere, he refers to the 'vices and moral corruption of human race' (*OPA*,2:104). At *NM*,2:182 there are references to 'evil of lack' and 'evil of deprivation', and in the second Earthquake essay Kant refers to 'evil deeds'. So gathering all these descriptions under the term "moral evil" is a reasonable step.

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<sup>61</sup> Kant will do so in the late-Critical *Failure*



We are now in a position to put forward a taxonomy of evil on Kant's behalf for further use in this study - an implied taxonomy. There are two categories remaining after discounting physical evil and natural evil.

- Metaphysical Evil conceived as limitation
- Moral Evil - the evil done and the subsequent suffering

The challenge for any would-be theodicy at this stage of our study is twofold. First, evil as limitation must be addressed. Here two alternatives would seem to be open for a theodicy's promoter. Either (i) an account is required that removes God's *prima facie* responsibility for production of a world where evil was unavoidably present through the createdness of the world or (ii) evil as limitation must be eliminated from the taxonomy of evil against which the theodicy is set. Second, moral evil as evil done is seemingly the direct responsibility of human beings. If so, the role of an omniscient God in bringing about these beings as part of creation, seeming to bear an indirect responsibility for evil must be addressed in any successful theodicy.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **IS PHILOSOPHICAL THEODICY POSSIBLE FOR KANT?**

I contend that in his pre-Critical period, in contrast to his late-Critical period, Kant held that philosophical theodicies were possible. The aim of the chapter is to substantiate this. However, some further preliminary work must be done first. There are three essential components in a would-be theodicy: evil, God, and human freedom. The first component, evil, was investigated in the previous chapter with the outcome that moral evil is one of the two elements of the implicit taxonomy of evil put forward on Kant's behalf. The other two components, God and human freedom, must now be addressed. For evil to be classified as moral in the first place implies that persons must bear responsibility for the evil done or suffered. To be responsible requires that they could have done otherwise. That is to say, they made a free choice for the evil concerned. So the first question to be answered is whether Kant, at this stage of his career, has established an account of human freedom sufficiently robust for this purpose. The second question is perhaps so obvious that it can be easily overlooked. Namely, in the pre-Critical period, on what foundation does Kant's position rest that there *is* a God whose moral attributes require rational reconciliation with evil? As stated previously, theodicy requires a *theos*.

### ***Does the pre-Critical Kant have an account of Freedom?***

In order to answer this question it necessary to examine the *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*<sup>62</sup> of 1755 as this is the principal pre-Critical work in which Kant considers freedom. The particular focus is on Proposition IX (NE,1:398-406) which deals with what he terms the 'determining ground'. Kant is fully cognisant of the threat posed by necessitation since if we are fully necessitated in all our actions, moral and physical, any defence of God's holiness, benevolence, and justice in the face of moral evil cannot get off the ground. Kant certainly sees Crusius as the main opponent to be defeated if he, Kant, is to give an account of freedom which is sufficient for the ascription of moral responsibility to humans. The following shows that Kant fully understands the implications of a failure to do so and the Crusian argument going through:

If it [the Crusian argument for necessitation] is the case that whatever happens can only happen if it has an antecedently determining ground, it follows that whatever does not happen could not happen either, for obviously no ground is present, and without a ground nothing could happen at all...It follows, therefore, that all things happen in virtue of a natural conjunction, and in such a connected and continuous fashion that, if someone were to wish the opposite of some event or even of a free action, his wish would involve the conception of something impossible (NE,1:399).

However, Kant immediately seeks to demolish the argument from Crusius<sup>63</sup> with the following:

[I]n the case of the free actions of human beings: in so far as they are regarded as determinate, their opposites are excluded; they are not, however, excluded by grounds which are posited as existing outside the desires and spontaneous inclinations of the subject as if the agent were compelled to perform his actions against his will...and as a result of a certain ineluctable necessity (NE,1:400).

Here, Kant is clearly not only asserting that human beings are free in their decisions to act but he is also discriminating between actions having a determining ground and being necessitated. All actions have a determining ground even when arising from the use of human freedom to choose. Moreover, once an action is taken, an alternative action is clearly not concurrently possible. However, the opposite is not excluded as impossible prior to the freedom to choose being exercised as would be the case with necessitation.

Notwithstanding that rebuttal, the challenge from Crusius does not go away so easily. Kant recognises this when he muses whether we, in the choices which we seem to be free to make, are nevertheless unfree and therefore God is an unjust judge:

[T]he charging to our account of the things we have done is charging us with what does not belong to us. But God is the one cause of all things. He has bound us by those laws that we

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<sup>62</sup> Hereafter *New Elucidation*

<sup>63</sup> Who is nevertheless described by Kant as 'illustrious' at NE,1:399 in the polite scholarly convention of the day.

accomplish the fate to which are destined, no matter what the circumstances. Does it not follow from this that no sin can be displeasing to God? For when a sin is committed, it also testifies to the fact that the series of interwoven events established by God admits of nothing else. Why then does God reproach sinners for actions which they were ordained to commit from the very seed and womb of the world? (*NE*,1:399)

This passage on its own could be regarded as a conventional defence of necessitation in a purely materialistic world. But Kant is alive to a further threat it poses to any potential theodicy when he adds 'it [the determining ground] also brings it about that no other actions could happen instead of it. Therefore what happens within us has been foreseen by God in its orderly sequence in such a way that nothing else at all could happen' (*NE*,1:399). If Crusius is correct, humans are not free in their actions, even when seeming so, and this implies that God knowingly chose to create a world where specific evil actions were unavoidable. Kant returns to God's foreknowledge later in *New Elucidations*. So shall we.

Kant's primary method of teasing out the various issues surrounding the threat of necessitation is to offer a dialogue between two imaginary characters, Caius and Titius. The dialogue opens with Caius looking back on his misdeeds and expressing the hope that what he supposes is Titius' stance is correct and that he, Caius, is not responsible for his misdeeds after all:

*Caius*: But on your [Titius'] view, every inclination of my will has been completely determined by an antecedent ground and that, in turn, by another antecedent ground, and so on right back to the beginning of things (*NE*,1:402).

But Titius at once destroys Caius's hope by reminding him that:

[*Titius*]: At any given juncture, the series of interconnected grounds furnishes motives for the performance of the action which are equally attractive in both directions: you readily adopted one of them because acting thus rather than otherwise was more pleasurable to you (*NE*,1:402).

In other words, everything up to the moment of Caius's choice, including the available choices themselves had, and must have had in order for the choice to exist, determining grounds but it was Caius who made the free choice between the alternatives on offer. Indeed, the determining grounds may themselves provide the motives behind the courses of action on offer but it is the will which decides between them<sup>64</sup>. Titius emphasises this when he says that the choice is the 'spontaneous inclination of your will' but Caius still seeks to escape the closing jaws of the trap by claiming that even his choice was necessitated. Titius counters that with 'this inclination of the will, far from eliminating spontaneity, actually makes spontaneity all the more certain, provided that "spontaneity" is taken in the right sense' (*NE*,1:402).

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<sup>64</sup> Schönfeld (2000,158) comments on this passage that 'the will is the master, the motive is its servant'. In this way Kant is in effect reversing the famous Humean position where reason is the slave of the passions.

Kant has clearly cast himself here as Titius and he makes three significant assertions in the one passage below. He gives us (i) his definition of spontaneity, (spontaneity ‘taken in the right sense’), (ii) his definition of freedom and (iii) his unequivocal stance on freedom. In passing, we can also note that Kant with (ii) is foreshadowing the apparent contradiction presented in the *Groundwork* of the exercise of freedom through obeying a law.

[i]For spontaneity is action which issues from an inner principle. [ii]When this spontaneity is determined in conformity with the representation of what is best it is called freedom. The more certainly it can be said of a person that he submits to the law, and thus the more that person is determined by all the motives posited for willing, the greater is that person’s freedom<sup>65</sup>. [iii] It does not follow from your line of argument that the power of antecedently determining grounds impairs freedom (*NE*,1:402).

Titius, having been previously concerned to deny Caius the solace that he was necessitated in his bad actions, then goes over to the offensive, seeking to undermine Caius’s own stance as philosophically unsustainable stating that ‘I am going to show you the silent deception which creates in you the illusion of the indifference of equilibrium’ (*NE*,1:403). His tactic is to show that true equilibrium does not exist and that we ‘strive towards objects in conformity with our desire but also...interchange the reasons themselves in a variety of ways and as we please’.<sup>66</sup> Our ability to do that, states Titius, is shown by the fact ‘we can scarcely refrain from supposing that the addressing of our will in a given direction is not governed by any law nor subject to any fixed determination’. To demonstrate the presence of the desire which determines our will, Titius suggests a thought experiment where a course of action is chosen but then we turn ‘our attention in the opposite direction.’ For Titius, the strength of feeling against taking this opposite course shows the strength of the original inclination. *Ergo*, there is no true equilibrium with nothing to disturb it; will as the power of choice determines which course is adopted. For Kant, it is this power of choice which demonstrates our freedom. To this he adds an additional supporting argument. Should there be true equilibrium without disturbance, subsequent actions would be random (cf. *NE*,1:402) and this would negate moral responsibility as effectively as would necessitation.

Henry Allison advances the same reading, interpreting Titius/Kant as follows, and endorsing *New Elucidation*’s significance in the development of Kant’s thought on freedom:

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<sup>65</sup> Kant is here anticipating the apparent paradox which he will treat fully in the *Groundwork*, namely of freedom through compliance with a law, the moral law.

<sup>66</sup> This anticipates the ‘natural dialectic’ Kant describes in the second *Critique* in which we attempt to rationalise making ourselves an exception to the moral law in order to follow our sensible inclinations.

Kant's claim that the notion of a lawless will involves him in an absurdity places him squarely within the metaphysical tradition that rejects the conception of a "liberty of indifference". This rejection is a constant in Kant's thought; it can be found in his earliest significant discussion of freedom<sup>67</sup>, where he defends the Leibnizian view (1986,400).

Caius, however, does not give up and re-raises the awkward topic of God's foreknowledge. This issue was shown earlier, when considering Crusius' stance, to have the potential to undermine any seemingly workable theodicy. The reason for this, granting for argument's sake that God is not the author of evil, is an omniscient God nevertheless still chose to create mankind knowing that evil would be committed. Caius states:

But I am convinced that you are faced by difficulties which are equally great. In what way, do you suppose, can the determinate futurition of evils, of which God is in the last analysis the ultimate determining cause, be reconciled with his goodness and holiness? (NE,1:403)

At first God seems to be in trouble when Titius appears to agree:

It seems that He cannot persecute the sins, which have been interwoven into the tapestry, with all the anger to which the holiness of His nature entitles Him, since the blame for all these evils eventually redounds upon God himself, as the one who first engineered their occurrence (NE,1:403).

Titius gives even further ground when he refers to a series of interlinked events that include both moral and physical evils:

In instituting the origin of the totality of things, *God initiated a sequence of events*. This sequence, in the fixed connected series of interlinked, interconnected and interwoven grounds, *embraced even moral evils*, as well as the physical events corresponding to them (NE,1:404). (My emphasis).

This passage might also suggest that Kant, at this stage of his career still held onto some vestigial link between moral and physical evil despite what he wrote earlier in *Universal Natural History* breaking that link. In my view, this is not the case as Kant uses the term "physical events" not "physical evil". He is merely saying that suffering can result from moral evil which no-one would dispute. This suggestion concerning moral evils is also close to Alexander Pope's position in his *Essay on Man* which was highlighted when Reflection 3704 was discussed but which would be eventually rejected in the later *Only Possible Argument*. Nonetheless, Titius believes that he still can 'dissipate the clouds' for Caius as he also states that 'it does not follow that God can be accused of being the Author of morally corrupt actions' (NE,1:404). Titius holds that if we were mere machines with no option but to passively carry out pre-established functions the accusation against God would stand but he re-asserts his claim of self-determination and freedom:

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<sup>67</sup> Allison footnotes a reference to *New Elucidation* 1:398-405, the same section being considered here.

[T]hose things which happen through the will of beings endowed with understanding and the spontaneous power itself of self-determination obviously issue from an inner principle, from conscious desires and from a choice of one of the alternatives according to the freedom of the power of choice (*NE*,1:404)

It is significant that here Kant is offering a description of human freedom<sup>68</sup> as a means of absolving God but is not yet able to explain how it is we are free. Indeed, nine years later but still in his pre-Critical period, in the 1764 work *Inquiry concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morals* Kant acknowledges this situation:,

[E]ven today the philosophers have not yet succeeded in explaining the concept of freedom in terms of its elements, that is to say, in terms of the simple and familiar concepts of which it is composed (*DP*,2:282).

However, what matters for present purposes is whether Kant himself was sufficiently convinced of the reality of human freedom at the time of writing despite the lack of a conclusive explanation or deduction. I contend that he was and thus another of the pre-conditions for offering or defending a theodicy is met. It can also be remarked, in fairness to Kant, that he did not have the philosophical toolkit available to him to complete the job in a more satisfactory manner. He had not yet attained one of the crucial insights of his Critical philosophy in his resolution of the third antinomy in the first *Critique* (A448-451), namely that we are free in the intelligible world yet sensibly determined. Indeed, when we see the inconclusive results of his thinking here, it can be seen as part of his working through the problems of speculative metaphysics in general the eventual rejection of which led to his critical, Copernican, turn<sup>69</sup>. Indeed, Theis goes further holding that it was through his considerations of theodicy *überhaupt* that Kant was able to crystallise his thoughts on the speculative metaphysics with which he struggled in his pre-Critical period. Theis states:

We think that it is through the question of optimism and of the critical exercise with regard to Leibniz that Kant intended to put to the test some of the ontological, metaphysical and theological assumptions which registered in his personal program of reform of metaphysics such as he proposed during the course of the Fifties (2009,157). (My translation).

In that connection, it is ironic to note that Kant's first words in *New Elucidation* are: 'I am about to throw some light, I hope, on the first principles of cognition and to expound in as few pages as possible the product of my reflection on the subject'. It was to be another twenty-six years before Kant was sufficiently satisfied with his efforts in this area to produce the eight hundred plus page first edition of the first *Critique*.

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<sup>68</sup> David Walford, whose translation is being used as the primary text here, points out in a footnote that Kant later rejected the account of freedom given here, citing, *inter alia*, the second *Critique* (*CPR*,5:95-101).

<sup>69</sup> For a thorough treatment of this rejection see Schönfeld (2000)

Nevertheless, we must still ask whether Titius's statements constitute an effective rebuttal of Caius's stance on God's foreknowledge. I would argue that it does not. They still do not show how God in creating the world has not also created the opportunity for evil which could have been avoided had He not chosen to create. This was the principal challenge from the argument from Crusius noted earlier. To my mind, this question dogs all Kant's consideration of theodicy without a successful riposte ever being given. Kant never provided a rebuttal to the charge of complicity in evil that, through His foreknowledge, God knew that evil would occur but nevertheless He still chose to create.<sup>70</sup>

***On what foundation does Kant's position that there IS a God rest?***

In the introduction, it was stated that the existence of God must be a live proposition for someone concerned with theodicy. It was for the pre-Critical Kant and the best way of confirming this is to examine his consideration of God's attributes and the arguments for His existence.

In the first *Critique*, Kant dismisses the three, and for him the only three possible<sup>71</sup>, theoretical proofs of God's existence (A590-630), but in the second *Critique* he advances a so-called moral proof (CPR,5:124-5). Kant's stance in his pre-Critical period on the existence of God is part of the story of his move towards the eventual rejection of theoretical proofs, but this progression was far from linear. In his early pre-Critical period Kant did not see a need for a theoretical proof of God's existence; it was not necessary either for faith or for philosophical purposes. On the contrary, in his early work, it often seems to be taken for granted that God exists and that further, Kant appears to accept those attributes of God conventionally assigned to Him in the mid-eighteenth century. For example, in Reflection 3704, we have seen Kant make the following observation on Leibniz's *Theodicy*:

But, appealing to the goodness, wisdom and power of God which are sufficiently well-known from other indisputable reasons, he [Leibniz] gives such people reason to hope that the defects will be balanced by benefits in the whole (*Refl*,17:232).

But Kant does not question God's goodness, wisdom, or power, nor set out the 'indisputable reasons'. In a similar vein, also in Reflection 3704, Kant starts his consideration of Leibnizian optimism (theodicy) with the following: '[o]ptimism is the doctrine which justifies the existence of evil in the world by assuming that there is an infinitely perfect, benevolent and omnipotent original Being'. However, in examining that Reflection, we saw Kant giving an early

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<sup>70</sup> The only apparent solution would be to remove the element of choice from God and claim that the concept <God> included the idea that God MUST create and thus any supersensible being which did not create was not God. It must be stressed, however, that Kant never put forward such an argument.

<sup>71</sup> Thus, by implication, dismissing his own argument from possibility in *Only Possible Argument*.

indication of his concern about theoretical proofs of God's existence and the reliance placed upon them in deriving or accepting the then conventional attributes of God. In consequence, I held that Kant was amongst the 'troubled' to which he referred (see p.25). There is one pre-Critical work which Kant devotes to the proof of God's existence, namely *The Only Possible Argument* but the first signs of Kant seeing the need for a proof emerge eight years earlier in *New Elucidation*. In this earlier work one of the propositions considered by Kant stated that '[t]here is a Being, the existence of which is prior to the very possibility both of itself and all things. This Being is, therefore, said to exist absolutely necessarily. This being is called God' (NE,1:395). The basis of his argument is that the concept of possibility is grounded on comparison. But, for comparison there must be an existent to compare with and thus 'it follows that nothing can be conceived as possible unless whatever is real in every possible concept exists and indeed exists absolutely necessarily' (NE,1:395). In other words, possibility is grounded in actuality, reality. Thus what is not now but will be in the future is possible only because there is a necessary being containing all reality, past present and future, and this being we term God. At various points in his argument he presents the corollary, for instance when stating that 'if you deny the existence of God, you instantly abolish not only the entire existence of things but even their inner possibility itself' (NE,1:395). So the first thing that can be said about Kant's pre-Critical God is that it is a necessary being which prevents an infinite regress of determining grounds which suggests that Kant, at this stage of his career, was attracted to what he would later term the Cosmological Argument.

The argument for God's existence which Kant put forward in 1755 in *New Elucidation* was in many ways a rehearsal for a refined version of the argument from possibility in *Only Possible Argument* of 1763. This is clear when he states in the latter work that '[t]he argument for the existence of God which we are presenting is based simply on the fact that something is possible' (OPA,2:91). In this view, I am following Manfred Kuehn who states, when describing the argument of the *Only Possible Argument*, that 'a rudimentary version of the argument is already present in the *Nova Dilucidatio* [New Elucidation]' (2001,140). Also L.W. Beck holds that 'the *Only Possible Argument* repeats, with a few changes, the modified form of the ontological argument presented already in the *Nova Dilucidatio*' (1969,455).

Nevertheless some comment on the title *Only Possible Argument* is apposite. Its tentative nature, evident from the full title, is significant as Kant explains that his aim is not to provide a demonstration but rather to offer some considerations which could contribute at some stage to this. To me, this indicates that Kant was not confident that what he was about to offer amounted to a sufficiently rigorous, complete proof. Loades has a similar view. She states that 'Kant reiterated the point that he could not offer a rigorous demonstration of the existence of



the deity but only direct attention to what he proposed was the one source of reality' (1985,119). Indeed, in the Preface to the work, Kant acknowledges this using an analogy:

What I am furnishing here is the materials for constructing a building; they have been assembled with great difficulty and they are now offered to the critical scrutiny of the expert in the hope that what is serviceable among them may be used to erect an edifice which accords with the rules of durability and harmoniousness (*OPA*,2:66)

This highlights the tentative nature of Kant's claims in this matter. However, the work's opening sentence shows that he was not at all tentative in a much more important regard:

I do not esteem the use of such an endeavour, such as the present one, so highly as to suppose that the most important of all our cognitions, there is a God, would waver or be imperilled if it were not supported by deep metaphysical investigations (*OPA*,2:65)

In other words, whatever the result of the search for a proof of God's existence, in no way would Kant's faith in God be undermined. Further, it also shows that Kant does not see a proof as necessary. Yet by this stage of his career, we can see that he was caught in an uneasy no-man's land between faith in God which did not require a proof of His existence and the philosopher's desire for such a proof. This can be readily sensed from his further statement that '[f]aith in the existence of God does not require "metaphysical investigations"'. Although there are proofs meeting the demands of common sense, scholars feel the lack of a demonstration' (*OPA*,2:65). It is noteworthy that Kant is here discriminating between faith and knowledge as he will famously do in the preface to the second edition of his first *Critique* (Bxxx). He is also stating that it is not a requirement for faith to have the objective certainty which would flow from a metaphysical demonstration. This is the first mention of the different grounds for faith and knowledge which he will expound with his tripartite taxonomy<sup>72</sup> of *Fürwahrhalten*<sup>73</sup> that will become an established component of Kant's moral philosophy in later works, and indeed form one of the pillars for his own eventual 'authentic' theodicy.

As the purpose here is to illustrate the existence and nature of Kant's belief in God at this stage of his career, a detailed re-examination of the proof from possibility as set out in *Only Possible Argument* is not needed. What is significant for this study is that Kant at this stage of his career was giving it serious consideration. Also significant, despite the work's title, is that in *Only Possible Argument* Kant puts forward a second possible argument of a different stripe in the First Reflection of Section Two, namely 'In which the Existence of God is inferred *a posteriori* from the Unity perceived in the Essence of Things'.

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<sup>72</sup> Opinion/belief/knowledge.

<sup>73</sup> Holding-to-be-true

In this reflection Kant is once more concerned principally with what he sees as the underlying unity which exists in nature. He supports his argument by probing the opposite case:

A multiplicity, in which each individual [entity] had its own special and independent necessity, could never possess order, or harmoniousness, nor could there ever be unity in their reciprocal relationships to each other (*OPA*,2:95).

He then goes further to make the supposition, on the basis of the observed unity, 'that there is a supreme ground of the very essences of things themselves, for the unity in the ground also produces unity in the realm of all its consequences' (*OPA*,2:96). In other words, he is arguing from the unity of the consequences to a single supreme ground. This sounds much like an attempted teleological proof of God's existence but this is different from the *a priori* proof from possibility which forms the major theme of the work (cf. *OPA*,2:91). This additional argument could also be called a higher level teleological proof since he is concerned not with the immediate purposiveness of nature but rather with the underlying laws of nature which ground its perceived unity. It will be recalled that this type of argument is not new, Kant having advanced it previously in Reflection 3704 and in *Universal Natural History* (cf. *UNH*,1:331).

This consideration of a teleological-type proof on Kant's part is surprising as in the same work, he appears to dismiss teleological (physico-theological) and cosmological proofs when as he states there that '[n]one of the proofs which argue from the effects of this being to its existence as cause can ever – even granting that they are of the strictest character, which they are not – render the nature of this necessity comprehensible' (*OPA*,2:91). If there is now doubt about Kant's position, this would seem warranted as this dismissal occurs *before* the advancement of the higher level teleological proof discussed above. However, Kant offers us a partial resolution in tabling the Reflection 'In which the Inadequacy of the usual Method of Physico-Theology is demonstrated' (*OPA*,2:116). Here he advocates the supremacy of such a proof based on the unity in nature over a proof based either on miracles or the contingent order of nature. Kant then offers an extended case for his revised Physico-Theological method (*OPA*,2:117-137) and it would appear that he is advancing a rival argument to that from possibility. But Kant acts to close the emerging fissure:

Nor, indeed, is the ground of my amazement removed once I have convinced myself that all the unity and harmony I observe around me is only possible because a Being exists which contains within it the grounds not only of reality but of all possibility (*OPA*,2:152).

In other words, his revised Physico-Theological argument rests on the antecedent argument from possibility. Nevertheless, despite this diversion, Kant shows that he has recognised the only corners from which any possible proof of God's existence could emerge and the standard which it must meet:

All arguments for the existence of God must derive from one or other of two sources: either from the concepts of the understanding of the merely *possible*, or from the empirical concept of the *existent*...What has to be proved, namely, is the existence, not merely of a very great and very perfect first cause, but of the Supreme Being who is above all beings. (*OPA*,2:155)

In the above I have discussed the proofs of God's existence thematically but, when reordered chronologically, a different picture emerges from a high level précis:

1. 1753. In *Reflections* 3703-5 Kant's discussions are based on the assumption that God exists.
2. 1755. In *New Elucidation* Kant advances a prototype argument from possibility.
3. 1759. In *Optimism*, Kant's arguments rest on some unidentified stance with respect to God's existence.
4. 1763. In *Only Possible Argument*, despite the title, Kant offers not only a detailed version of the argument from possibility but also considers a dependent physico-theological argument despite a seeming rejection of *a posteriori* proofs.

The challenge for the Kant scholar is what conclusion can be drawn from Kant's consideration of the proofs of God's existence in the pre-Critical period. This is especially difficult in light of the far from rectilinear progress exhibited above. Although it might seem to be avoiding scholarly responsibility, I hold that there is no need to draw firm conclusions provided my stance is accepted that the pre-Critical period for Kant was a time of exploration, not transition, and certainly not one of final conclusions.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the above considerations fully illustrate Kant's conviction that there *is* a God, something he never lost in his career. Speculation about the strength of that faith would be groundless, but still Kant could not resist the intellectual attraction of emerging theoretical proofs even though he had not embraced the need for them. The final words of *Only Possible Argument* provide a cogent summary of Kant's position: 'It is absolutely necessary that one should convince oneself that God exists; that His existence should be demonstrated, however, is not so necessary' (*OPA*,2:163).

So, in sum, for Kant there is a God and human beings have freedom. As the types of evil to be addressed were identified in the previous chapter, all the prerequisites for a theodicy are now met. This allows examination of those theodicies which Kant in his pre-Critical period saw as successful.

### ***Are Philosophical Theodicies Possible?***

Firstly, it is certain that Kant fully appreciated the work that any theodicy must do. In *New Elucidation*, he discriminated between antecedently and consequentially determining grounds stating that the first explains 'why, or the ground of being or becoming' and the second 'that, or the ground of knowing' or as he states 'a consequentially determining ground does not bring the truth into being; it only explains' (NE,1:394). But this is no interesting yet abstract move on Kant's part since he applies this differentiation to evil:

[T]he world contains a number of evils. What is being sought is not the ground *that*, in other words, not the grounds of knowing, for experience takes its place. What has to be specified is the ground *why*, that is to say, the ground of becoming (NE,1:392).

This is important for this study since Kant was recognising here that he had not only to search for a reasoned argument to support a theodicy but also a theodicy has to answer reason's demand for the explanation, the ground, *why* evil can exist concurrently with a moral God. In the Introduction (p.8) we saw that these were the two demands of reason that a theodicy must meet.

As stated at the start of the chapter, I contend that Kant, in his pre-Critical period, did see philosophical theodicies as possible. Assessing the evidence for this is best done in chronological order but when this is done it will be seen that Kant's stance once more does not follow an orderly progression. Also, it must be stressed that at no point Kant does state "here is my theodicy" or similar. Rather, the evidence consists in statements that imply a theodicy because they offer the reasoned explanation recognised as needed by Kant at NE,1:392.

In Reflections 3703-5 Kant showed that he fully understood the nature of Leibniz's theodicy not only with respect to the best possible world but also the distinction between God's antecedent and consequent will. Nevertheless, there is nothing in these Reflections to support a claim that he explicitly endorsed Leibniz's theodicy. Indeed the opposite would seem to be the case since, in Reflection 3705, he raised the two significant problems discussed in Chapter 1. Whilst these problems were solved later we should not look to an explicit endorsement of Leibniz for Kant's stance on theodicy at this stage of his career. Rather in Reflection 3704 he expressed his preference for Pope's system stating that:

This path [to the beautiful proof of God's existence]...is precisely this which constitutes the perfection of his system – even subjects every possibility to the dominion of an all-sufficient original Being; under this Being things can have no other properties, not even those which are called essentially necessary, apart from those which harmonise together to give complete expression to his perfection (RefI,17:233).

Whilst I hold that Kant failed to differentiate sufficiently between Pope's system and that of Leibniz, what matters here is Kant's attitude to the former. Pope's system does not deny that things, injurious to humans, happen in this world but claims that everything, of whatever nature, is for the good - 'whatever is, is right'. That Kant endorses Pope's system and claims that everything gives expression to God's perfection is to offer a theodicy in all but name, since what is experienced as evil serves a higher purpose to a greater good.

In the following year, 1755, Kant gives us the following in *New Elucidation*:

By thus pruning away the branches which yield an abundant harvest of evils, and, in so far as it is compatible with human freedom, eliminating them, He has in this way shown Himself to be someone who hates all wickedness, but also someone who loves the perfections which can nonetheless be extracted from that source (*NE*,1:405).

In the one sentence, Kant is contemplating three quite different genres of theodicy. Firstly, when he underscores human freedom he suggests a free-will defence of God. Such a defence claims that, in giving humans the freedom needed to be morally responsible, it is unavoidable that some will misuse that freedom to commit evil and that God is not to blame for such misuse. In this way, moral responsibility and evil are the opposite sides of a single coin; you cannot have one without the other. Secondly, eliminating all avoidable evil is presumably directed towards producing or maintaining a best possible world. Finally, the idea that good or 'perfections' can be derived from evil suggests an instrumental account of evil or greater good theodicy. Kant also put a greater good theodicy into the mouth of Titius in the imaginary dialogue: 'God also allowed things to creep into his scheme which, in spite of the admixture of many evils, would yield something which was good and which the wisdom of God would elicit from them' (*NE*,1:404). Indeed, a free-will defence could be interpreted as a greater good theodicy as it can be claimed that God in foreknowledge chose to create a world containing free human beings knowing that the good which would come from that would more than outweigh the evil that He foresaw. Whilst Kant did not explicitly make such a connection, in the passage immediately above, there is still more than sufficient evidence that in 1755 Kant believed that philosophical theodicies could be successful.

One cautionary note is needed. In the conclusion of the second of the 1756 Earthquake Essays, Kant again sketches the outline of a greater good argument when he states that 'That same supreme wisdom...has subordinated lower purposes to higher ones...to attain those infinitely higher aims that far surpass all the resources of nature' (*EE*2,1:460). This suggests that Kant considers that the undoubted human suffering which results from natural disasters is somehow serving a divine higher purpose which is unknown to us. At first sight this looks like a

theodicy. However, as Kant has explicitly rejected natural harm as form of evil, to be consistent, this cannot be a theodicy as there is no evil involved.

In 1759, Kant wholeheartedly defended the best possible world in the *Optimism* essay which was a source of later embarrassment to him. Whilst his defence is unquestionable, he does not endorse a theodicy based upon it even though he recognises that is how Leibniz has employed the concept (cf. *Opt*,2:29). But is that enough to argue that Kant was not advancing a theodicy? I judge not. If one states that the world is the best possible that God could have realised, whether through limitations in His power or those from compossibility and simultaneously acknowledging evil's presence in the world *im Allgemeinen*, then one is inescapably excusing God from responsibility for that residual evil. In the previous chapter, Kant's later embarrassment about *Optimism* even in his pre-Critical period was highlighted which could suggest some back-tracking on his part with respect to the best possible world. I take that not to be the case since any embarrassment could have arisen from (i) the realisation just four years later with *Negative Magnitudes* that evil was not just that arising from limitation but there was also evil with a positive ontological ground and (ii) the toe-curling praise of the best possible world at *Opt*,2:34-35.

Although in the *Only Possible Argument* of 1763 there is much on the laws of nature, there is little in the way of an implied theodicy. However, as we have seen, Kant offers an interesting perspective on God's conjectured intervention in these laws through miracles. Kant is concerned here with miracles which would have the aim of improving matters, stating that '[e]verything supernatural, construed as an interruption of the order of nature, seems of itself to constitute a deformity' (*OPA*,2:108) and that 'I should find it amazing if anything occurred or could occur in the course of nature in accordance with general laws which was displeasing to God, or in need of a miracle to improve it' (*OPA*,2:112). In other words, if God acted through miracles to bring about a perceived improvement in the world, it would be an admission that the world was not the best possible in the first place. Thus best possible world theodicies are lent significant, but perhaps unintended, support by Kant's rejection of miracles.

In sum, in his pre-Critical period Kant saw philosophical theodicies as possible and gave evidence of this at several points in his writings. Whilst he entertained possible theoretical proofs for God's existence, he had yet to reach the point with the first edition of the first *Critique* where he rejected them. A corollary of these possible proofs being accepted is the claim, at least implied, to have at least some knowledge of God. That the theodicies of this period were based on such knowledge of God did not at this stage invalidate them in Kant's

eyes. In the next Part of this study dealing with the early part of his Critical period we will see this picture evolving.

## PART B – THE EARLY CRITICAL PERIOD – A TIME OF TRANSITION

### Introductory Remarks

The start of the period saw the publication in 1781 of one of the seminal texts in the history of thought, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Whilst this revolutionary work was marked by Kant's famous Copernican turn, I will show that on theodicy at least, his thoughts developed in a more measured way<sup>74</sup>. It will be seen that for Kant in this period there were some pre-Critical holdovers, some definite changes from that period, and the first discussions of some aspects, such as God's role in morality, that point forward to the third time period, late-Critical and the substantive treatment they will receive there. For that reason alone, study of this period is essential if a full account of the development of Kant's thought on theodicy is to be given.

The major sources upon which this part of the study draws are the first edition in 1781 of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the work which ever since has defined the watershed in Kant's philosophy, and the *Lectures*. These will be supplemented by two shorter works considering history from a moral philosophical perspective; *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*<sup>75</sup> (1784) and *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*<sup>76</sup> (1786). But first the scene must be set.

## CHAPTER 4 – SETTING THE SCENE

### *Justification of the Use of Lectures*

Before considering how Kant's thought on theodicy evolved in his early-Critical period, it is necessary to justify any reliance on *Lectures* as caution is warranted with this source. The reason for such caution is that *Lectures* was not published until 1817, some thirteen years after Kant's death, based on notes taken by his students in lectures given in 1783/4, some thirty years previously. Various other lecture notes taken by Kant's students were worked up into book form with Kant's approval in the last decade of his life, but *Lectures* is not one of these. It is thus without his *imprimatur* which gives rise to three specific concerns<sup>77</sup>. The first is whether

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<sup>74</sup> It can be noted however that some scholars, for example Frederick Beiser and John Silber, do talk of a Copernican turn in Kant's moral philosophy. This is based on a claimed parallel, the reversal in this case being that of the right and the good when Kant argues in the *Groundwork* that the moral law precedes the good rather than following from it.

<sup>75</sup> Hereafter *Idea*

<sup>76</sup> Hereafter *Conjectural Beginning*

<sup>77</sup> For the history of the material which formed the *Lectures*, see the Editor's Introduction in *Religion and Rational Theology* (p.337). In the editor's view the lectures which formed the basis of the *Lectures* were given in 1783/4



*Lectures* accurately reflects Kant's then current views. The second is that lecturers at Königsberg University in Kant's time were required to lecture to set texts, in this case Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*. This prompts the question "does *Lectures* reflect Kant's views or those of Baumgarten?" The third concern is the divergent views in the literature on the standing of *Lectures*.

A sample of four views illustrates this last concern. Amongst those taking a positive view is Christopher Insole in his 2008 paper 'The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant's Conception of the Highest Good'. In this he relies heavily on *Lectures* to support his arguments. That he does so without questioning *Lectures*' reliability is indication, to my mind, that he is not concerned on this score. A second supportive view comes from Duncan who considers *Lectures*, *Conjectural Beginning*, and *Idea* as a group to show the agreement between *Lectures* and the published two works from the same period in which the *Lectures* were given (cf.2012,975n).

Set against these positive indicators, two negative ones. In his book *Kant as Philosophical Theologian*, Bernard Reardon cites Gerhard Lehmann, the editor of the *Akademie Ausgabe* of *Lectures*, as being 'somewhat dubious of the full authenticity of the Pölitz text [*Lectures*] as it stands' (1988,76), suggesting it is an amalgam of three other partial texts. This in turn suggests that an extra editing process could have taken place to fuse *Lectures* into the single text we know today. The concern is that each editing cycle is another interpretative exercise potentially taking the eventual result further from the original.

Another reservation comes from Karl Ameriks. In his *Kant's Elliptical Path*, he includes the following view on *Lectures*: '[t]he most detailed indication of Kant's view on God's metaphysical relation to us comes from some not *clearly* trustworthy notes to lectures on philosophical theology, apparently from the 1780s' (Ameriks' emphasis) (2012,275). However, Ameriks' words suggest to me, not that *Lectures* must be disregarded, but rather that *Lectures* cannot be given the benefit of the doubt and must be regarded as untrustworthy until proved otherwise. Such a conservative attitude towards a source of doubtful authority is fully warranted until a satisfactory level of justification can be provided<sup>78</sup>. As indicated above, I aim to provide such a justification.

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<sup>78</sup> In my correspondence with Professor Ameriks, he expressed the view that 'basically my view is that the *Lectures* material for metaphysics, ethics, etc as well as religion does seem to be quite reliable on the whole and should regularly be used by scholars for, the formulations seem to come from quite independent sources and to confirm that Kant used basically similar formulations from year to year, and modified also in understandable ways, so that trends in later lectures generally match trends in later

The justification will contain three strands: that (i) Kant was prepared to disagree with Baumgarten in principle, (ii) Kant disagreed with Baumgarten in *Lectures* on matters specifically connected to theodicy and (iii) Kant's views in *Lectures* are consistent with those in *Idea* and *Conjectural Beginning*.

#### *Disagreement with Baumgarten in Principle*

A clear example can be found near the start of first *Critique* in the first part of the Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements which Kant terms the Transcendental Aesthetic. In this, Kant shows that space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition. Thus he gives "aesthetic" a different meaning to the conventional one of his time, and this forms the grounds for disagreement with Baumgarten:

The Germans are the only ones who now employ the word "aesthetics" to designate that which others call the critique of taste. The ground for this is a failed hope, held by that excellent analyst Baumgarten, of bringing the critical estimation of the beautiful under principles of reason, and elevating its rules to a science. But this effort is futile. For the putative rules of criteria are merely empirical as far as their sources are concerned, and can therefore never serve as *a priori* rules according to which our judgement of taste must be directed, rather the latter constitutes the genuine touchstone of the correctness of the former. For this reason it is advisable again to desist from the use of this term and to save it for that doctrine which is true science[.] (A21n)

When we consider that Baumgarten was amongst the period's foremost philosophers, that Kant was prepared to use the words 'failed hope' and 'futile' to characterise his efforts and to reserve the word 'aesthetic' for his own epistemological purpose<sup>79</sup>, provides, in my view, robust evidence of Kant's readiness to challenge and disagree with Baumgarten where he felt justified.

#### *Disagreement with Baumgarten on Theodical Issues*

The next challenge to using *Lectures* arises from the requirement that lecturers at Königsberg University had to utilise set texts, in this case Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*. Again, this could lead to the charge that the views put forward in *Lectures* were not Kant's own but those of Baumgarten. Whilst Kant did indeed use that work, I contend that it was not to teach from but rather to act as a foil for his own views. To support this, we have Kant's own statement at *Opt*,2:35 that '[i]n the coming semester, I shall, as usual, be lecturing on...metaphysics and

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publications'. I consider that this view of Professor Ameriks aligns well with the argument presented in this study. However, he has major concerns about mismatches between *Lectures* and the treatment of the Paralogisms in the first edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason* and it is these which prompt his general caution.

<sup>79</sup> Kant revisits this whole subject in 1790 with his third *Critique* when he offers a Critique of Aesthetic Judgment where "aesthetic" has a more conventional meaning.

ethics using Baumgarten'. Supporting my contention is Kant's use of the word "using" not "from". However, unsupported by further evidence, reliance on just this one word would provide insufficient justification for utilising *Lectures*. Kant disagrees with Baumgarten at several places on matters relevant to theodicy, but two examples involving God's properties suffice.

First, *Lectures* records Kant as stating that '[i]f the author talks about God's *sincerity*, this expression is far beneath the dignity of the highest being' (*Lect*,28:1084), noting that "author" refers to the author of the text Kant is using, namely Baumgarten. Here Kant is taking issue with Baumgarten<sup>80</sup> as he (Kant) holds that attributes such as sincerity are only 'negative perfections' in the sense that someone would predicate of them of God only for the purpose of denying them. Kant holds that anyone who in that way would deny God's sincerity would no longer be talking about God. Additionally, Kant gives us to understand that attributes such as truth and sincerity are secondary qualities which can be subsumed under "holiness", one of God's three moral properties.

Second, Baumgarten offers the following in *Metaphysica* §922 '[s]ince God's highest life is absolutely necessary (for it is his essence itself and his existence), God is not only immortal, but *only he has absolute immortality*.' Kant acknowledges that God is immortal due to the 'absolute necessity of his [God's] existence', but holds that 'the expression "immortality" is unsuitable, because it is only a mere negation of an anthropomorphic representation' (*Lect*,28:1089). Kant sees that, despite their representational usefulness, we need to purge our concept of God of such anthropomorphisms. One can infer that Kant's objection to "immortal" was that it referred to an entity as "not dying" but even the denial of death is not part of the concept of God. Kant justifies such an inference when he states that 'it is much better to use the expression "eternal" instead of "immortal" since it is nobler and more appropriate to the dignity of God' (cf.*Lect*,28:1089).

From these illustrative examples, I contend that where Kant disagreed with Baumgarten in matters affecting theodicy, such disagreements are reflected in *Lectures*. This conclusion is supported by that of Schönfeld who summarises the situation as '[a]lthough Kant's textbook Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* was as conventional as it gets, Kant's comments were not' (2000,232).

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<sup>80</sup> The editors of *Religion and Rational Theology* highlight the following in n68 (p.480) from Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* §919 as the proposition Kant is opposing: 'SINCERITY is benevolence concerning what is signified in one's mind, and this is in God'

### *Comparison with Published Material*

Whether the notes which led to the *Lectures* were accurate *in toto* cannot be answered but what we can do is to compare Kant's views as recorded in *Lectures* with those in published works of the same period. *Lectures'* reliability in this regard has been attested to by Schönfeld (2000) and Duncan (2012). They argue that theodical views expressed in the two minor works, *Idea* and *Conjectural Beginning*, coincide with those in *Lectures*. Nevertheless, given the crucial role of *Lectures* in this study, an independent examination of this issue is required rather than relying solely on others' conclusions. It will be seen that the re-examination will also unearth theodically interesting material.

In *Conjectural Beginning* Kant offers an account of Genesis where the "Fall" results from human beings becoming conscious of their power of reason<sup>81</sup>. Before that, human beings were merely animals responsive to instinct and thus incapable of right and wrong. Kant states:

Before reason awoke, there was neither command nor prohibition and hence no transgression; but when reason began its business and, weak as it is, got into a scuffle with animality in its whole strength, then there had to arise ills and, what is worse, with more cultivated reason, vices, which were entirely alien to the condition of ignorance and hence of innocence (CB,8:115).

This shows that Kant is treating Genesis at two levels. Firstly, he is clearly dismissing a literal interpretation of the Biblical story with its apples and serpents. Secondly, he is not dismissing the reality of a fall; but it is a fall from pure animality into humanity as a species, a fall from moral ignorance into moral accountability<sup>82</sup>. The corresponding statement in *Lectures* records Kant as saying:

A special germ toward evil cannot be thought, but rather the first development of our reason toward the good is the origin of evil. And that remainder of uncultivatedness in the progress of culture is again evil. Is evil inevitable, and in such a way does God really will evil'? (*Lect*,28:1078)

The agreement here between these passages concerning evil's origins, the first from 1786 and the second from the notes taken in 1783/4 requires no amplification, but there is another element in the second citation which demands attention. This is the notion of progress towards the good. Again agreement with this can be found in *Conjectural Beginning*:

Whether the human being has gained or lost through this alteration [the development of reason] can no longer be the question, if one looks to the vocation of his species, which consists in nothing but a *progressing* toward perfection (CB,8:115).

The agreement is strongly reinforced by this further passage from *Lectures*:

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<sup>81</sup> Christine Korsgaard (1996,110) offers the same reading.

<sup>82</sup> It is a fall at an individual level too when the age of reason is reached - the age at which a child is held capable of discerning right from wrong.

Not at all: but rather God wills the *elimination* of evil *through the all-powerful development of the germ toward perfection*. He [God] wills that evil be removed through *progress toward good*. Evil is also *not a means to good*, but rather arises as a *by-product*, since the human being has to struggle with his own limits, with his animal instincts. This means that goodness is placed in *reason*; this means is the striving to tear himself out of uncultivatedness. When the human being makes this beginning, he uses his reason in the service of instinct; finally he develops it *for its own sake*, Hence he finds evil *first* when his reason has developed itself far enough that he realises his obligations[.] When the human being has developed himself completely, *evil will cease of itself*' (*Lect*,28:1078).

This shows not only the agreement between the *Lectures* and *Conjectural Beginning*, but also gives an early indication of a three phase development: first man as animal, then man who uses reason to work out the way achieve ends given to him by his inclinations, and then, finally, man uses reason for its own sake with the potential for the good/perfection<sup>83</sup>. Additionally, with his statement that '[e]vil is also not a means to good', Kant is distancing himself from the instrumental theodicies which we saw him contemplating in his pre-Critical period.

The theory of the origin of evil through growth in reason but which at the same time held out the prospect of eventual perfection is also to be found in *Idea*. Kant presents the work in eight propositions. The second begins:

*In the human being (as the only rational creature on earth), those predispositions whose goal is the use of his reason were to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual* (*Idea*,8:18).

The three way match we now have between *Lectures*, *Conjectural Beginning*, and *Idea* on this important topic acts to increase the confidence that the first properly reflects Kant's views<sup>84</sup>. This subject will be reconsidered later when we ask whether such an account of moral progress grounds a theodicy or not.

So in sum, I hold that the foregoing analysis shows that (i) Kant was prepared to disagree with Baumgarten where necessary, (ii) in the lectures he gave Kant was prepared to disagree with the content of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, and (iii) views expressed in the *Lectures* coincide with those in published works from the same period. With such a foundation in place, we can now mine the theodically relevant material in *Lectures* with confidence. Reinforcing this

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<sup>83</sup> Kant develops this idea of a three phase development fully in the *Religion* of 1793

<sup>84</sup> Kant is here confirming that the development of reason occurs in not the lifetime of each individual (i.e. in Man rather than in a man) but rather a gradual trans-generational development from animal through human to full rationality (see *Idea*,8:20 and *Lect*,8:115-16), a Darwinian rather than Lamarckian moral evolution where this would take place in the phenotype.

conclusion is the agreement displayed between *Lectures* and the first *Critique* on various topics. This will be seen in the next chapter when “Innovation” is considered thematically.

### ***The First Critique and Theodicy***

It is plainly not my intention here to embark on a comprehensive examination of the first *Critique*, a path already beaten by many a distinguished scholar. My aim is more modest, namely to bring under consideration just that material which is relevant to the aim of tracing the development of Kant’s thought on theodicy. Experienced students of the first *Critique* might well hold that there is nothing of theodical relevance in that work. In contrast, whilst acknowledging that Kant did not present a theodicy, even an implicit one, and never used that word in the first *Critique*, I hold that there are two important functions that the first *Critique* performs concerning theodicy. One provides in Kant’s terms a negative discipline (cf.A795 and below) and another, a positive role.

First, the negative discipline. That for which the work is most famous, Kant’s revolutionary metaphysics and epistemology, acts to limit the claims of any theodicy which is to remain compatible with these aspects of his thought. Specifically, there are implications from the limitations of our possible knowledge and from the theoretical proofs of God’s existence. It will be seen that this is a key factor in Kant’s later rejection of philosophical theodicies in *Failure*.

Second, the positive role. Contained in just thirty pages (in the *Akademie Ausgabe*) towards the end of the work is the second chapter of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method – The Canon of Pure Reason<sup>85</sup>. Here Kant rehearses many of the ideas in moral philosophy which he will fully develop in later works, particularly in the second *Critique*. The most significant of these ideas is that of the Highest Good which is dealt with in the second section of the Canon. This forms the hinge around which Kant’s moral faith and eventual authentic theodicy will turn. This second, positive, role will not be examined in detail here as consideration of the topics dealt with in the Canon is better postponed until the thematic treatment covering all the relevant early-Critical works in the following chapter.

### ***The Effect of Kant’s new Metaphysics and Epistemology***

A major achievement of the first *Critique* was establishing the boundaries of what we could know. In what became famous as his Copernican turn, Kant showed that our senses do not present us with the appearance of the world as it really is but rather that we construct such appearances ourselves. However, this is not reworked Berkeleyan idealism because what we

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<sup>85</sup> Hereafter “Canon”

perceive does not owe its existence to our perception. Rather it is grounded in things as they really are, things-in-themselves, to which we do not have epistemic access. In the production of knowledge, the senses are fundamental, necessary but not sufficient as understanding is also required. Sensation is the faculty of representation being affected by an object's presence and intuition is cognition in that sensibility. However sensibility does not work independently from our cognitive faculties in that each sensation already displays the hallmark of spatial and temporal organisation which is imposed by the subject on the raw sensory input. Thus Kant terms space and time *a priori* forms of intuition. The understanding acts to bring the manifold of intuition under categorical concepts, such as causality and substance, also given *a priori*, which provide structure to the manifold and without which our sensory experience would just be a jumble. This knowledge can be used together with existing knowledge organised under concepts gained empirically to reason inferentially. This is an exceptionally abridged description of the path to knowledge, but the essential point for Kant and for this study is that this path starts with the senses<sup>86</sup> and can start in no other way, since the categorical concepts on their own are blind<sup>87</sup>. As a result we cannot have *knowledge* of what we cannot perceive; there is a boundary to knowledge.

Now, at various points in his philosophy, Kant asserts that, despite the limits of knowledge, it is in man's nature to still seek the grounds for what he experiences; he is an explanation-seeking animal. This process is unending and, viewed as a whole, forms a search for the unconditioned, that without an antecedent ground. Now, for Kant, pure reason is that without empirical content, and so a critique of pure reason is just that, a criticism of the use of reason to claim knowledge beyond its proper boundaries. Kant reminds us of this at the opening of the Canon:

The greatest and perhaps the only utility of all philosophy of pure reason is thus only negative, namely that it does not serve for expansion...but rather, as a discipline, serves for the determination of boundaries, and it has only the silent merit of guarding against errors (A795).

However, this does not mean that reason's use beyond the boundaries of knowledge is invalid but what it considers there are *ideas* of pure reason not knowledge. Kant holds that the three principal ideas falling under this stricture are: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. Now an ideal is an individuated form of an idea, so when Kant talks of God in the first *Critique*, it is as an ideal of pure reason. It is important to note that ideals are not products of the imagination but 'even though one may never concede them objective reality (existence), [they] are nevertheless not to be regarded as mere figments of

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<sup>86</sup> This is not an endorsement by Kant of Humean empiricism which is without the logically prior structuring provided by forms of intuitions and categorical concepts.

<sup>87</sup> A51: 'Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind'.

the brain; rather, they provide an indispensable standard for reason' (A569). Whilst at no point does Kant claim that we have (or can have) knowledge of this God, it is clear that a great deal can still be thought about this ideal with Kant, for example, offering that it is 'singular, simple, all-sufficient, eternal, etc' (A580).

The implication for any attempted theodicy is clear and quite startling. Any theodicy which relies on claimed knowledge of God whether this is derived by theoretical reason, from a purported divinely revealed text, or simply asserted, must fail in Kant's eyes. This would seem to present an insuperable difficulty for the person, including Kant himself, who attempts to advance any theodicy. Mark Larrimore goes as far as to suggest that the 'first *Critique* made theodicy null and void' (2004,79). But this is to go too far since there is an alternative and better interpretation. It is that the would-be theodicy constructor is forced to seek another route to God which does not amount to a knowledge claim and yet is robust enough to base a theodicy upon. It will be seen later that this is exactly what Kant did. Kant confirms this stance with respect to knowledge of God at various places in the first *Critique*. One is enough for our purposes and that included here also has the advantage of indicating the alternative route to God which Kant will eventually take, the moral route:

Now I assert that all attempts of a merely speculative use of reason in regard to theology are entirely fruitless and by their internal constitution null and nugatory, but that the principles of reason's natural use do not lead at all to any theology; and consequently, if one did not ground it on moral laws or use them as guides, there could be no theology of reason at all (A636).

From the final part of the citation we see that Kant was not concerned with theology *per se* but with *rational* theology just as he is concerned later in the second *Critique* to show that it is *rational* faith which is warranted. For Kant, theology and faith must be grounded in reason which is consistent with the pre-eminent role given to reason in his definition of theodicy.

#### *The Possible Proofs for the Existence of God*

It might be thought that showing that we cannot have knowledge of God was sufficient to undermine the extant claimed proofs of God's existence. Clearly, Kant thought he had to go further. He held there were three and only three such proofs and his dismissal of these has been the subject of much scholarly thought. So a short description of each and the reason for its dismissal by Kant will be enough for our present purposes. Firstly, there is the Ontological Proof which attempts to show that the concept of God necessarily implies His existence. The proof attempts to do this by claiming that the concept of God as existing is more perfect than a concept of God who does not exist. By such an argument, as God is all-perfect, *ergo* God exists. Kant dismissed this proof by famously asserting that existence is not a predicate and



consequently existence adds nothing to the concept of God. Existence merely means that the concept is instantiated. It can be noted that this explicit rejection also implies abandoning the tentative *a priori* ontological-type proof from possibility in the pre-Critical *Only Possible Argument*. Secondly, there is the Cosmological Proof. In short, this sets out an argument from existence in general to the existence of a necessary being to terminate an otherwise infinite regress. The proof then states that since there is at least one existent, myself, an absolutely necessary being must therefore exist. It purports to be a proof from experience of the world and thus cosmological but Kant dismisses it as merely a disguised version of the ontological proof. This is because something can only exist necessarily if its existence is part of its concept and arguing from the concept of God to His existence Kant has already discounted. Finally there is the Physico-Theological Proof which instead of considering existence in general, ‘uses observations about the particular constitution of this sensible world of ours for its grounds of proof’ (A605). Kant is attracted to this final proof as it provides a focal unity in studying nature<sup>88</sup> and an intellectual foundation for the order that is perceived there. Nevertheless, Kant ultimately dismisses it too. He concedes that all it could ever establish would be a highest architect of the world but never a creator of the world<sup>89</sup>. Indeed, Kant holds that in attempting to move from world architect to creator, the physico-theological proof makes an appeal to the cosmological proof which in turn is only a concealed ontological proof. Again, it can be noted that this also invalidates any tentative proof from experience which I argued was also present in outline in *Only Possible Argument*. The outcome is that Kant holds that we cannot prove the existence of God through theoretical reason but, equally, the corollary that theoretical reason cannot prove His non-existence either. As far as theodicy is concerned, any attempt which employs similar reasoning or a call on the results of these proofs is therefore bound to fail if it is not to conflict with the kernel of Kant’s Critical philosophy.

With the preliminary issues dealt with and the scene set, we can now move to the consideration of the detailed topics related to theodicy in Kant’s early-Critical period.

## CHAPTER 5 - ASPECTS OF THEODICY

The objective of this chapter is to set out the evidence for my characterisation of Kant’s early-Critical period as transitional. As highlighted before, such a transition is in marked contrast to

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<sup>88</sup> Because of the arguments usefulness in the study of nature which displays such order, Kant will recast the argument as physico-teleological in the third *Critique* thus divesting it of any theological significance.

<sup>89</sup> In *Universal Natural History*, Kant’s support for the on-going functioning of the laws of nature made, in my view, the role of a highest architect redundant; all that was needed was the initial materials and the laws of nature

the revolutionary change which occurred in his metaphysics and epistemology with the 1781 publication of the first *Critique*. I will argue that Kant's theodical thought shows that different components of his overall philosophical project were developing at different speeds and hence got out of step with each other. My stance rests on an examination of theodically relevant topics drawn from the four primary sources listed in the previous chapter but foremost amongst these is *Lectures* which underscores the importance of the earlier justification for its use. These topics have been gathered into three groups as an elucidatory device only, the boundaries between the groups being occasionally fuzzy. The three groups are: (i) topics where Kant's thought is unchanged from his pre-Critical period, (ii) those where there is a clear change and (iii) those appearing in his thoughts for the first time and thus innovations.

### ***Early Critical Continuity***

In this group five topics will be examined where I consider that Kant's thought was maintained, broadly unchanged from his pre-Critical period, but which continued to be relevant to theodicy in the period under consideration.

#### ***The Continual Working of the Laws of Nature***

In examining his pre-Critical period, we saw repeated assertions by Kant that there were universal and unchanging laws of nature which were continual in operation, with no exceptions for time, place, or person. Additionally, we saw this stance strengthened when Kant embraced Newtonian mechanics as the description of these laws. However, in the resultant system, Kant still kept a place for God but not as the "hands-on" manager of the universe. In *Lectures* Kant's commitment to the principle of no detailed management of nature on God's part is again apparent. He states that '[i]t would be presumption, and a violation of God's holy right, to want to determine precisely that this or that is and had to be God's end in the production of a certain thing' (*Lect*,28:1069). Our earlier consideration of *Universal Natural History* and *Only Possible Argument* showed that Kant downplayed, if not rejected, miracles and this is also continued in *Lectures*, when he not only reinforces the point concerning detailed management but also regards miracles as undermining order in the world:

So it is likewise unthinkable that God, who is the *causa prima* of the whole of nature, might also cooperate as a *concausa* in each particular occurrence. For then these occurrences would just be so many miracles; for every case where God himself acts immediately is an *exception to the rule of nature*....But if God is to cooperate as a special *concausa* of every particular natural occurrence, then every occurrence would be an exception to the laws of nature, or rather there would be no order at all in nature, because the occurrences would not happen according to general rules (*Lect*,28:1109).

Notwithstanding his position on God's intervention whether routinely or by miracles, Kant continued to resist any suggestion that the continual working of the laws of nature without divine intervention in any way diminished God and reduced Him to a deist God, stressing this point as:

But if we find that a great deal of the order and perfection in nature has to be derived from the essence of things themselves according to universal laws, still in no way do we need to withdraw this order from God's supreme governance (*Lect*,28:1070).

This is clear evidence of Kant's continuing desire to keep a place for God within an essentially Newtonian physical world and within his philosophical system *überhaupt*. When this topic was discussed in our examination of the *Universal Natural History*, we saw that Vailati made the useful distinction between an interventionist God and conservationist God (see p.34). In these terms, whilst Kant continues to reject the notion of a God who continually intervenes in the workings of the universe, this does not mean that He fails to conserve it in its present state. God still exercises 'supreme governance'. This is important theodically since, if God has withdrawn from the world after creation, an essentially deist view, there would remain a much diminished challenge for theodicy to meet, perhaps none at all since God would be completely divorced from all subsequent events in the world including the evil ones. In his pre-Critical period Kant also used the principles of Newtonian mechanics to defeat the notion of physical evil. The latter, reclassified in this study as natural harm, could in no way be construed as punishment for moral evil. Thus by maintaining his stance on the laws of nature, Kant also carried forward this important conclusion into and through his early-Critical period.

#### *The Dismissal of Lazy Reason*

In *Lectures*, this is a corollary of the continual working of the laws of nature. The dismissal of lazy reason was a recurring theme in Kant's pre-Critical period and one which he saw as the tendency to give up too early searching for accounts based on the laws of nature. When this happened people prematurely stopped investigating the sensible world for explanations and assigned responsibility for phenomena to a divine being. We saw Kant expressing himself in this way in *Universal Natural History*. In *Lectures* Kant is still advising his auditors against lazy reason, stating that 'I must nowhere appeal directly to God whenever I perceive beauty and harmony. For this is a kind of lazy reason' (*Lect*,28:1071) and more fully with:

Theology cannot serve to explain the appearances of nature to us. In general it is not a correct use of reason to posit in God the ground of anything whose explanation is not immediately evident to us...In general it is no use of reason, and no explanation, to say that something is due to God's omnipotence. This is lazy reason (*Lect*,28:997).

Although Kant puts the term to a quite different use in the first *Critique*, it nevertheless supports its use in *Lectures* as a warning against unjustified ways of thinking. He states that:

The first mistake that arises from using the idea of a highest being not merely regulatively but (contrary to the nature of nature of an idea) constitutively, is that of lazy reason (*ignava ratio*) (A689).

The context in which Kant is setting this particular warning is when we start to consider the highest being constitutively, hypostasising God considered as an ideal. There is then a risk that we assign powers and attributes unjustified by *theoretical* reason when, as shown in the first *Critique*, we do not (and cannot) have knowledge of God. However, there is an interesting contrast here. Whereas in *Lectures* Kant was warning against giving up thinking prematurely when phenomena were arbitrarily deemed as God's work and thereby discouraging scientific investigation, in the first *Critique* he is warning against taking thinking too far. This affects theodicy by reinforcing the strictures on claiming knowledge beyond the boundaries of experience which was highlighted in the previous chapter. The reflection here on the highest being as constitutive as opposed to regulative is not our final consideration of the topic. In the following chapter when unresolved tensions are discussed, we will return to it in greater depth.

### *The Happiness of Evil Men*

Kant in Reflection 3703 questioned whether the evil man suffered disadvantages in this world to offset the benefits from his evil-doing and whether this might assuage the sense of injustice felt by the upright man (cf. *Refl*,17:229). In *Lectures* Kant maintains this stance that '[i]f we investigate this closely we find that the disproportion between the two is not really so large[.] We must not be blinded by the outward glitter that frequently surrounds the vicious person' and '[t]he restlessness of his conscience torments him continually, agonising reproaches torture him continually, and all his apparent good fortune is really only self-deceit and deception' (*Lect*,28:1081). This could be construed as a sort of theodicy since it supports the idea of justice in the world, or maybe better as an "anthropodicy"<sup>90</sup> as it does not involve God *per se*. It seeks, however, to reassure the good man that there is some justice in the world after all because the evil man is not as happy as he might seem due to his private turmoil. We will see later that by 1791 in *Failure*, Kant had completely reversed his standpoint on this. Nevertheless, even if an "anthropodicy", this issue is still significant for theodicy because, if it is correct that evil-doers do suffer in the way Kant still believed they do at this stage of his career, it at least reduces the force of any claim of injustice against God.

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<sup>90</sup> I thank Georg Cavallar (1993) for this useful neologism.

### Man's Freedom as a Pre-Requisite for Morality

In Kant's pre-Critical period and particularly in *New Elucidations* we saw him concerned to show that man is free to make (im)moral choices. There he rebutted necessitation as advanced by Crusius and, through an imaginary dialogue, put forward an account of freedom, albeit unconvincing in my view. As Kant maintains throughout his career that freedom is required for moral responsibility and so for morality itself, it comes as no surprise that he should express himself in that manner in the period under consideration. For instance:

It is just the same with practical freedom which must be presupposed in human beings if the whole of morality is not to be abolished. The human being acts according to the idea of freedom, he acts *as if he were free, and eo ipso he is free* (*Lect*,28:1068)

However, this is not just confirmation but also a reference to the nature of freedom. In the first *Critique* Kant has shown that we cannot have knowledge of freedom, only an idea of it and the citation from *Lectures* is consistent with that. It also anticipates the move in the third section of the *Groundwork* where Kant again equates acting under the idea of freedom with being free.

### The Best Possible World

This topic illustrates the sometimes fuzzy boundaries between the groupings in use. Nevertheless, the inclusion of this topic here is warranted because the end-result was the same, namely that Kant continued to support the notion of a best possible world, our world. However, the grounds for such support began to expand to also encompass moral ones. Our starting point is Kant's continuing support in *Lectures* of the best possible world which he had so staunchly defended in Leibnizian terms in the 1759 *Optimism* essay.

That the world created by God is the *best* of all possible worlds is clear from the following reason. If a better world than the one willed by God were possible, then a *better will* than the divine will would also have been possible. For indisputably that will is better which chooses what is better, But if a better will is possible, then so is a being who could express this better will. And this being would therefore be more perfect and better than God. But that is a contradiction; for in God is *omnitudo realitatis* [all reality] (*Lect*,28:1097).

In addition to this theological defence of the best possible world, where God is an entity that per definition always chooses the best, Kant also supports another of Leibniz's arguments for such a world. This is that we are not in a position to judge the whole of creation (world in this context comprising more than our planet). Hence we cannot state that this world is not the best possible despite the occurrence of evil. Kant concurs with this limited view of creation:

If God commands something for which we cannot understand the reason, then this is because of the limitations of *our* cognition, and not because of the nature of the commandment itself. God

carries out his rulership over the world *alone*; for he surveys everything with one glance. Of course he may often use wholly incomprehensible means to carry out his benevolent aims (*Lect*,28:1114).

The first passage above yields a theodicy but the second one only a defence. That the best possible world does so requires no elaboration. However, any attempted theodicy based on our 'limited view' leaves us unable to judge whether this is the best possible world and in consequence unable to deny that it is so. Thus our agnostic state on this matter leaves us unable to acquit or convict God on any charge of responsibility for evil in the world. Thus this argument only defends God rather than offering the reasoned explanation which would meet Kant's definition of theodicy. However, in supporting a 'limited view' defence here, Kant still has to walk a fine line, as above we have already seen him continuing to condemn "lazy reason". So care must be taken that the limitations of our view do not come from a failure to think about and explore theodicy energetically. There can be no "lazy theodicy". Once more, in the second passage Kant anticipates a key consideration in his late-Critical thoughts on theodicy, namely the ways in which God's *modus operandi* are incomprehensible to us.

However, Kant also advances another possible ground, a moral one, for supporting the notion of a best possible world.

Thus we can and must assume for reason's sake that everything in the world is arranged for the best, and that the whole of everything existing is the best possible one. This doctrine has the same influence on morality as it has on natural science; for if I cannot be sure that the laws governing the course of nature are the best ones, then I must also doubt whether in such a world true well-being will eventually be combined with my worthiness to be happy. But if this world is the best then my morality will stand firm and its incentives will retain their strength (*Lect*,28:1098).

This argument links the best possible world with morality for the first time. It requires that the world is the best possible in order to underpin morality rather than attempting to show that the world is the best possible *per se*. To my mind, such an argument does not work. That the best possible world is required to underpin morality in Kant's view does not therefore make it necessary that this is actually the best possible world. The requirement on its own cannot form a proof. The passage also includes the notion 'worthiness to be happy'. Here it is linked with 'true well-being' without our being told what our well-being consists in. In the final section of this chapter where we will set out those topics new to Kant's thought, it will be seen that 'worthiness to be happy' is a vital consideration concerning the Highest Good which plays a pivotal role in Kant's late-Critical moral philosophy. Also pointing towards Kant's eventual treatment of the Highest Good which links happiness with virtue as compliance with the moral law is the following from *Lectures*:

But if both moral and physical perfection are *combined*, then this is the best world. The objective end of God in creation was the perfection of the world and not merely the happiness of creatures, for this constitutes only the [world's] physical perfection (*Lect*,28:1100).

This statement again shows progression in Kant's thinking on the best possible world as it now has both physical and moral dimensions. Nonetheless, before ending our consideration of the best possible world, there is a lingering cause for concern which has the potential to place the subject amongst the unresolved tensions to be considered in the next chapter. The concern arises from the following puzzling statement:

it is possible to recognise the doctrine of the best world from maxims of reason alone, independently of all theology and without its being necessary to resort to the wisdom of a creator in proof of it (*Lect*,28:1098).

Kant then proceeds to give an argument that the best possible world can be derived from observing nature where 'in every plant and animal there is not the least thing which is useless and without purpose' and then claiming that if this is the case with 'irrational nature' how much more true it must be for the 'nobler part of the world, in rational nature'. The impact for theodicy is that with this claim Kant appears to be trying to establish a best possible world without calling on God. This could be a device to exonerate God for evil in the world. Should such an interpretation be correct, it would distance God from His creation in a quasi-deist fashion. It also leaves some doubt about the motivation to establish that this world is the best possible. Leibniz clearly wanted to show this to be able to defend the justice of God in the light of evil in the world. But here, as there no suggestion of a demiurge-type being at work, Kant seems to be toying with the idea that the world, independently of God, could have made itself the best possible in some way. To my knowledge, Kant does not explore this intriguing idea further at any point in his corpus.

### *The Significance for Theodicy*

Although there was no change in the considered topics, they remain significant for potential theodicies. In summary, they are:

- Any harmful results of the laws of nature are not evil; neither are they divine punishment.
- When thinking about God and His attributes, giving up prematurely on explanations for phenomena in the sensible world and seeing their direct causation from God is "lazy reason".
- The injustice arising from the apparent happiness of the wrong-doer is not so great.
- Man carries moral responsibility for his freely chosen evil actions.
- This world is the best possible which God could have chosen to create.

Together, these are limits that would have constrained any formal theodicy that Kant could have put forward at this stage of his career. It should again be noted that Kant does not put forward an explicit theodicy in this period but I hold that these considerations nonetheless have a direct bearing on any attempted reasoned explanation which lies at the heart of a theodicy as identified in the Introduction and with which he remained concerned in his early-Critical period.

### ***Early Critical Change***

In this section, two important aspects are examined where the degree of change from Kant's pre-Critical period is sufficiently marked to indicate a distinct break, illustrating the development in his thinking on theodically relevant issues.

#### **Reason and Moral Development**

One argument put forward in justifying the reliance on *Lectures* as an authoritative source for Kant's stance on theodicy in his early Critical period was the match between views in *Lectures* and the published works from the same period, *Idea* and *Conjectural Beginning*. One such match concerned Kant's view at that time that the growth in reason in human beings explained the origins of evil as moral evil. Kant states that '[a] special germ toward evil cannot be thought, but rather the first development of our reason toward the good is the origin of evil' (*Lect*,28:1078). Kant confirms this:

When the human being makes this beginning, he uses his reason in the service of instinct; finally he develops it for its own sake, Hence he finds evil first when his reason has developed itself far enough that he realises his obligations (*Lect*,28:1078).

Here there is a foretaste of Kant's later description of the predisposition to the good in *Religion* where there are also three stages of moral development set out, albeit described in different terms (cf. *Rel*,6:26-28). It is noteworthy that Kant foresees a time '[w]hen the human being has developed himself completely, evil will cease of itself'. The issue is given added potency in the following passage from *Lectures*:

In this earthly world there is only progress. Hence in this world goodness and happiness are not things to be possessed, they are only paths toward perfection and contentment. Thus evil in the world can be regarded as *incompleteness in the development of the germ toward the good*. Evil has *no special germ*...It is nothing beyond this, other than incompleteness in the development of the germ to the good out of uncultivatedness (*Lect*,28:1078).

Here there are several forward looking elements: 'there is only progress', 'paths toward perfection and contentment', and 'development...out of uncultivatedness', which together raise question marks about the historical process of moral improvement which Kant clearly



sees occurring. Four non-trivial questions arise. First, is the evil which is undoubtedly present in the world we experience serving some purpose? Second, is this evil to be excused as some unavoidable side-effect of a pre-established historical process leading to moral perfection? Third, following on from that question, is God involved as the process director? And lastly, is there a possible theodicy implied, in that evil can be excused because it is either (i) unavoidable because part of a historical process and/or (ii) instrumental in producing ultimate moral perfection? Should the last be the case, it would be what I have termed elsewhere a “greater good” theodicy. All these questions call for a deeper look at what Kant is recorded as saying on this matter in *Lectures*.

The first issue which can be settled is that Kant undoubtedly sees a historical process in progress. This is confirmed in the continuation of the citation above:

[R]ather God wills the *elimination of evil through the all-powerful development of the germ toward perfection*. He [God] wills that evil be removed through *progress toward good*. Evil is also not a means to good, but rather arises as a *by-product*, since the human being has to struggle with his own limits, with his animal instincts. This means that goodness is placed in reason; this means is the striving to tear himself out of uncultivatedness[.] Hence he finds evil first when his reason has developed itself far enough that he realises his obligations. When the human being has developed himself completely, evil will cease of itself.’ (*Lect*,28:1078)

This passage contains much of theodical significance. To begin with, we can observe the persisting Leibnizian tone in Kant’s thoughts when classifying evil as a by-product since, for Leibniz, God does not intend evil through His antecedent will but it still occurs as a consequence. Moreover, with his statement that ‘evil is...not a means to the good’ Kant is again eliminating any potential instrumental theodicy in which evil is excused because it produces good. However, its allowance as a by-product whilst not being instrumental is quite a fine distinction for Kant to maintain on God’s behalf.

When the moral development process is considered, Kant says enough for us to reasonably conclude that he does not see the process occurring in individual human beings, but rather in humanity as a species. If that should be granted, Kant still leaves it open whether the process is sustained by human effort or whether God is involved and further whether there is some kind of moral historicism at work which inevitably leads humanity towards a predetermined telos of moral perfection. Whichever answer is correct, there are theodical implications. In the first case since man is responsible for the pace of progress, individuals would be responsible for the extent of the residual moral evil and this would act as the foundation for a variant of a free-will theodicy. Nevertheless, God’s residual responsibility would again seem to be that He chose to create, with the foreknowledge arising from omniscience, a world containing men who would choose moral evil during this progression. In the second case, the process has been

initiated by God in the act of creation. It is outside our control so that humans could no longer be held accountable for the evil. It could even be said in such a case that moral evil *per se* did not exist since this requires human accountability at an individual level to be *moral* evil. A species cannot be morally responsible. What is clear is that any theodicy constructor would then have a well nigh impossible job to establish God's innocence.

However, there can be no doubt about Kant's position. He sees God as exonerated since he states that '[t]his justifies God's holiness, because by following this path the whole species of the human race will finally attain to perfection' (*Lect*,28:1079). Although Kant does not use the word "theodicy", this is one in all but name. One aspect of the agreement between *Lectures* and works published in the same period was that in *Conjectural Beginning* Kant also advanced a "theodicy by progress". In that work Kant explained that the process started when reason was acquired by humans to accompany their animality. We read that:

Before reason awoke, there was neither command nor prohibition and hence no transgression; but when reason began its business and, weak as it is, got into a scuffle with animality in its whole strength, then there had to arise ills and, what is worse, with more cultivated reason, vices, which were entirely alien to the condition of ignorance and hence of innocence (*CB*,8:115).

But despite this, human beings are in a process leading to moral perfection.

Whether the human being has gained or lost through this alteration [the development of reason] can no longer be the question, if one looks to the vocation of his species, which consists in nothing but a *progressing* toward perfection[.] (*CB*,8:115).

One aspect of this historical account, consistent with that in the later *Groundwork*, is that Kant describes how the moral law derived from our rational nature can be in conflict with the inclinations which come about from our sensible nature. None of the above, however, helps to answer the principal question to be addressed here, whether man is in control of this process or merely the input to it, namely what is processed. But whichever is the case, Kant cannot and does not allow any diminution of man's responsibility for moral evil since he states in *Conjectural Beginning*:

Thus such a presentation of his history is beneficial and serviceable to the human being for his instruction and improvement by showing him that he must not blame providence for the ills that oppress him; that he is also not justified in ascribing his own misdeeds to an original crime of his ancestral parents...but rather that he must recognise with full right what they did as having been done by himself and attribute the responsibility for all ills arising from the misuse of his reason entirely to himself (*CB*,8:123).

Whilst accepting the notion of a "Fall" (cf. *CB*,8:115 and p.67), Kant is here rejecting the traditional, Christian, idea of an original sin passed from generation to generation. This rejection means that from the awakening of reason, however basic, Kant holds that man as an

individual, is responsible for moral evil done and he re-emphasises this responsibility *ab initio* when he again assigns moral responsibility to man in this historical process:

As soon as the human being recognises his obligations to the good and yet does evil, then he is worthy of punishment because he could have overcome his instincts. And even the instincts are placed in him for the good; but that he exaggerates them is his own fault, not God's (*Lect*,28:1079).

So, from the evidence so far, whilst Kant is advancing the notion of a historical process of moral improvement, he firmly holds that man rather than God is in control of the process, and hence responsible for any progress made and the residual evil which remains to be eliminated. But he does so without, in my view and that of Duncan (2012,983), providing any supporting argument for such a stance. However, such a provisional conclusion seems run counter to statements in *Idea* such as the Fourth Proposition:

*The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all its predispositions is their **antagonism** in society, insofar as the latter is the end the cause of their lawful order* (*Idea*,8:20).

Kant's argument is that this antagonism takes the form of '*unsocial sociability*' by which he means the tension from man's natural tendency to move from an individual existence to one in society and the conflicts that then arise. That is uncontroversial enough when viewed anthropologically but the same cannot be said of Kant's assertion about these conflicts when viewed from a moral standpoint. He sees these conflicts 'driven by ambition, tyranny and greed to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows' (*Idea*,8:21) but serving a constructive purpose in the development of man's talents which eventually result in society becoming a '*moral whole*'. Indeed, Kant thinks that without such conflict we would remain in an undeveloped Arcadian pastoral life with human beings being hardly better than their sheep. Moreover, 'without them [conflicts] all the excellent natural predispositions in humanity would eternally slumber undeveloped' (*Idea*,8:21). Such an argument would clearly provide the foundation for an instrumental theodicy where evil was the means to an eventual good but this is at odds with Kant's statement that 'Evil is also not a means to good' (*Lect*,28:1078). This evolutionary, developmental, account also prefigures a modern Irenaean theodicy of the type termed by John Hick "soul making" in his influential *Evil and the God of Love* (cf. Hick,2007,253-261) where this comes close to explaining evil as instrumental in leading to an eventual good state.

So the challenge is how can evil be concurrently a means to the good and inadmissible for such a purpose. A possible way of removing this contradiction is to interpret Kant as holding that evil is not a means to the good for the *individual* but is so for man as *species* in a development

process put in place by God. However, such a solution only acts to bring back God's role under the spotlight, especially when Kant concludes this Fourth Proposition from *Idea* with:

The natural incentives to this, the sources of unsociability and thoroughgoing resistance, from which so many ills arise, which, however, impel human beings to new exertion of their powers and hence to further development of their natural predispositions, thus betray the ordering of a wise creator; and not the hand of an evil spirit (*Idea*,8.21).

This suggests that, whilst an individual man may not use evil as a means to the good, God may do so. Should that be the case, then God would appear to be at least an accessory to evil's presence in the world. At first sight, this appears to make theodicy impossible. However, the above *is* a reasoned explanation but perhaps not one which is appealing to those whose God has the three moral attributes of holiness, goodness, and justice endorsed by Kant. Moreover, there is a possible counter available to God's defender. God provides the good part of the account - the competitive drive and man the bad parts - unsociability and resistance. *Conjectural Beginning* supports this, namely that God is working at the species level, man at the individual level and so can still be held responsible for the committed evil. Competitive drives per se are not wrong; man is responsible for their use in an evil way, and therefore God is not guilty of using evil as a means to the good. Such an interpretation is supported by the citation from *Lect*,28:1079 above.

### Free Will Defence

Free will defence is a common theodicy. It takes the general form that God could not have granted human beings free will and at the same time guaranteed that such free humans would not use choose evil rather than the good. Thus God is not responsible for humans' evil actions. Indeed a free will defence can be regarded as a natural outcome, the other side of the coin, of man's moral freedom which Kant asserted throughout his career. Some scholars have responded by attempting to deconstruct the defence by suggesting God could have chosen to instantiate a possible world where humans always freely choose the good, but that will not be treated here. Another common stance, especially in religious circles, is to accept free will defence and to defend it by saying that God in granting man free will made it possible for humans to freely choose to worship Him and not as automata. Whilst in no way reversing his stance on man's freedom or denying a free will defence theodicy *per se*, Kant acts to limit its allowable scope which is a change from his pre-Critical period when there were no such limitations. Kant provides evidence for this at multiple points in *Lectures* and so I hold that there is no question of misplaced reliance on an isolated passage. Three short citations suffice:

[H]e [God] needs no thing external to him, and nothing outside him could increase his blessedness (*Lect*,28:1065).

If, therefore, we talk about God's motives, nothing but the goodness of the object can be understood by it, but no subjective relations, as if God were out for praise or glory. For this would not be suitable to the dignity of the most blessed being (*Lect*,28:1066).

God would have needed the existence of a world in order to have his perfect blessedness. But this contradicts his highest perfection (*Lect*,28:1101).

From these extracts, it can be seen that Kant is strongly supporting the stance that God does not need anything. Indeed, to be in need contradicts God's perfection and His status as *ens realissimum* and *ens entium*. Accordingly, no successful theodicy can be based on the notion that God wants or needs anything from us. This is not new to theodicy as a subject having previously featured in Leibniz's *Theodicy* where he states that '[i]t is true that we cannot "render service" to him [God], for he has need of nothing: but it is "serving him" in our parlance, when we strive to carry out *his presumptive will*, co-operating in the good as it is known to us' (§58/H155) and 'his bliss is ever perfect and can receive no increase, either from within or without' (§217/H264). Thus, whilst the stance was not new, what Kant built upon it was. In his late-Critical moral philosophy he states on more than one occasion that doing God's will is obeying the moral law which is derived from our own rationality.<sup>91</sup> It is not a matter of praising God or seeking His favour, Kant dismissing this as just self-abasement, grovelling and wheedling in the hope of reward.

### **EARLY CRITICAL INNOVATION**

We now look at three important topics with a direct bearing on theodicy which Kant had not examined in his pre-Critical period. They were innovations in his thinking. In each of the areas, Kant's thought is of an introductory nature. He will treat them again in his late-Critical period where he builds on the outlines described here to adopt his substantive positions.

#### **The God of Morality and His Attributes**

Whilst Kant will later tie God tightly into his moral philosophy, in *Lectures* he starts down such a path in the following way:

*But our morality has need of the idea of God to give it emphasis. Thus it should not make us more learned, but better, wiser and more upright. For if there is a supreme being who can and will make us happy, then our moral dispositions will thereby receive more strength and nourishment, and our moral conduct will be made firmer* (*Lect*,28:996).

This suggests that Kant had foreseen a role for God in his moral system but that he had not yet reached the position taken in the *Groundwork* that the moral law must be obeyed for its own sake and be driven by no other incentive than respect for it. This need for God in morality is

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<sup>91</sup> In other places in his late-Critical corpus Kant refers to God as the moral law personified and acting on the laws of morality as divine commands.

not confined to *Lectures* as Kant had said much the same in the first *Critique* namely 'thus without a God...the majestic ideas of morality are...objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realisation' (A813). Such statements give ammunition to those who follow Hans Vaihinger's *als ob* – as if, interpretation of Kant's concept of God in his moral philosophy. In other words, acting *as if* there was a God underpins morality. In Vaihinger's view, it is a useful fiction acting as a regulative idea. However, if the above passage from *Lectures* appears to have defined Kant's stance at the time on the issue of incentives to moral behaviour, then any certainty does not last as, just two pages later, Kant is recorded as saying:

Natural morality must be so constituted that it can be thought independently of any concept of God, and obtain zealous reference from us solely on account of its own inner dignity and excellence (*Lect*,28:1002).

This corresponds better with his ultimate stance in the *Groundwork* and the opening of the preface to the later *Religion* (cf.*Rel*,6:3). However, on just the next page of *Lectures* Kant is recorded as not only reverting to his earlier statement at *Lect*,28:996 but emphasising the necessity of the incentive that flows from God's existence.

But further it serves for this if, after we have taken an interest in morals itself, to take an interest also in the existence of God, a being who can reward our good conduct; and then we obtain strong incentives which determine us to observe moral laws. This is a highly *necessary* hypothesis. (*Lect*,28:1003, my emphasis)

This seeming indecision is further reinforced even when confirming the primacy and self-sufficiency of reason for morality but nevertheless still wanting to retain some motivational element:

[T]he duties of morality are apodictically certain, since they are set before me by my own reason; but there would be no incentives to act in accord with these duties as a rational being if there were no God and no future world (*Lect*,28:1073).

These apparently contradictory passages are difficult to reconcile. One possible conclusion is that Kant in this period was struggling to establish his definitive position on this issue but that merely leaves the issue hanging in mid-air. Another possible conclusion is that when Kant is talking about self-sufficiency or similar, he is talking about the moral law, *per se*. When he is talking about God's possible role, he is concerned with our motivation to comply with that law, which has yet to reach purity *à la Groundwork*. Nevertheless, Kant is perfectly clear on which element, God or morality takes primacy in his system. It is the latter as is clear from '[b]ut moral theology is something entirely different from theological morality, namely, a morality in which the concept of obligation presupposes the concept of God' (*Lect*,28:1002). Once more we can cross-refer to the first *Critique* where Kant states:

Not theological morals; for that contains moral laws that presuppose the existence of a highest governor of the world, whereas moral theology, on the contrary, is a conviction of the existence of a highest being which grounds itself on moral laws. (A632n).

This stance is repeated, unchanged, in *Failure* and in the third *Critique*. Also in *Lectures* Kant begins to discuss the apparent tension which will result from the denial that we can have knowledge of God in the first *Critique* (already published in 1781) and yet still be able to postulate a God in the second *Critique*. We are offered a significant clue how Kant will resolve this tension when he refers to what theoretical reason cannot deliver. He states:

[T]he totality of what speculative reason can teach us concerning the existence of God consists in showing us how we must necessarily hypothesise this existence, but speculative reason does not show us how God's existence could be demonstrated with apodictic certainty (*Lect*,28:1036).

In addition, he notes that:

[F]or then we would only lack the knowledge that God exists, but a great field would still be open to us, and this would be the belief or faith that God exists. This faith we will derive *a priori* from moral principles. (*Lect*,28,1010).

This last sentence anticipates closely what Kant will attempt in the second *Critique* with his moral argument for God's existence. Further, it is also worthwhile to note that here, for the first time, Kant is mentioning that the eventual moral proof will be an *a priori* one. This condition will play a crucial role when the late-Critical period is discussed. These citations also preview Kant's famous assertion in the first *Critique*'s 1787 second edition: '[t]hus I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**' (Bxxx).<sup>92</sup> Kant reinforces this idea of another route to God in stating '[r]ather, reason does not put the least obstacle in the way of my accepting the possibility of God, if I should feel bound to do so in another way' (*Lect*,28:1026). In other words, the failure of the theoretical proofs of God's existence is not to be equated with a proof of His non-existence. Moreover, without such a proof, an alternative route to God still remains open for Kant. It is a moral route to God and forms a leitmotif throughout his later philosophy of religion. Kant reinforces this view with the additional consideration that, if we had knowledge of God, then morality would be reduced to merely prudential behaviour without moral value, or, looking to the future and the *Groundwork*, imperatives would then be hypothetical not categorical:

Hence our faith is not knowledge, and thank heaven it is not...For suppose we could attain to knowledge of God's existence through our experience...suppose further that we could really reach as much certainty through this knowledge as we do in intuition; then all morality would break down... [since] hope for reward and fear of punishment would take the place of moral motives[.] (*Lect*,28:1074).

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<sup>92</sup> References given in this form are to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*

However, it is possible to interpret the above as further illustrating Kant's indecision on the topic of incentives to moral behaviour at this stage of his career. He is here clearly stressing the undesirability of hopes for reward and fears of punishment but what are these other than the possible incentives to obey the moral law which he has seen as needed in other passages highlighted above?

Before leaving God's role in morality, it is also instructive to look at what *Lectures* can tell us about morality and the theoretical "proof" of God's existence to which Kant was attracted in the first *Critique*, namely the Physico-Theological proof. We are told that:

[I]f I make into a principle of religion a concept of God such as nature gives me, namely the concept of a very mighty being...in short, if I take as this principle not the concept of God as an all-perfect being but only the mere concept of a very perfect being, then from this little or nothing can be deduced toward the confirmation and awakening of a true morality (*Lect*,28:1117).

So we can clearly see in *Lectures* Kant confirming the failure of the physico-theological proof to establish an 'all-perfect' (as opposed to a merely 'very perfect') being. Consequently, the proof is unable to establish a God grounded in morality. Indeed, if compliance with the moral law is not to arise from 'hope for reward and fear of punishment' because we have knowledge of God, it is *required* that theoretical proofs of God's existence fail. It is also worth noting again that we cannot trace the development of Kant's thought on theodicy without also considering the development of his thought on God. Those parts of *Lectures* which have been highlighted so far are excellent examples of this.

So if the above looks forward to God's moral role, what attributes must God have in order to fulfil such a role? We will see that God's moral properties are important to Kant's assessment of attempted theodicies in *Failure*. It is therefore interesting to see these emerging in *Lectures* some seven years previously, which adds to the evidence that, in moral philosophy (practical reason), Kant did not experience something like a revolutionary Copernican turn but rather his thoughts germinated gradually.

We know already from the first *Critique* that we cannot have knowledge of God. Lack of knowledge, however, does not debar us from having a concept of God and in *Lectures* Kant claims that '[m]orality alone...gives me a determinate concept of God' and further that '[i]t teaches me to recognise him as a being having every perfection' (*Lect*,28:1073). Kant's argument for the latter is that in order to judge whether a person is worthy of happiness in proportion to his moral behaviour (in other words, the Highest Good) and to provide that happiness God 'must be omniscient, omnipotent, eternal and not in time.' In other words, if one grants for argument's sake that Kant succeeds in his argument for God's role in morality,



these “omni” properties are those which God *must* have in order to fulfil it. They result from the demands of morality, not from theoretical reason. Moreover, using a similar argument that anything else would not be the God of morality, Kant identifies God as:

A being who is to give objective reality to moral duties must possess without limit the moral perfections of *holiness, benevolence, and justice*. These attributes constitute the entire moral concept of God. They belong together in God, but of course according to our representations they have to be separated from one another. Thus through morality we recognise God as a *holy lawgiver, a benevolent sustainer of the world, and a just judge* (Lect,28:1073),

Nevertheless, he adds the warning that ‘[w]e must think of the holiness of the laws *as first*, even though our interest commonly beguiles us into placing God’s benevolence above it’. From this it can be seen that Kant’s justification for proposing these three properties is that if any of them were lacking, we would no longer be talking about a moral God. In this way, it is a transcendental argument, specifying the conditions necessary for a given situation to obtain.

### The Concept of the Highest Good

In Kant’s moral philosophy, the concept of the Highest Good plays a central role in that it is used to ground the practical postulates of immortality and God in the second *Critique*. These postulates are essential if his moral system is to ultimately succeed. The Highest Good grounds a moral faith in God’s existence which does not break Kant’s strictures on knowledge of God put forward in the first *Critique*. The importance to theodicy is that it is upon moral faith that Kant bases his own “authentic” theodicy in *Failure*.

Kant first advanced his concept of the Highest Good in 1781 in the Canon of the first *Critique* (A806-10) but did not fully develop it until the second *Critique*. In this later work he defines the Highest Good as virtue (consisting in obedience to the moral law) combined with happiness in the proper proportion to that obedience. In the first *Critique*, whilst Kant does not refer to the Highest Good *per se*, he clearly outlines its two components in the following passage:

[T]he necessary connection of the hope of being happy with the unremitting effort to make oneself worthy of happiness [through obedience to the moral law]...may be hoped for only if it is at the same time grounded on a **highest reason**, which commands in accordance with the moral laws, as at the same time the cause of nature (A810).

Kant also introduces the notion that obedience to the moral law does not comprise mankind’s final and total end, a theme that he will treat fully in the two later critiques. He states:

Thus without a God and world that is not now visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are...objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realisation because **they would not fulfil the whole end** that is natural for every rational being and determined *a priori* and necessarily through the very same pure reason (A813) (my emphasis in bold).

Here Kant is making four moves. First, he is previewing the practical postulates of immortality of the soul and God's existence, which he will definitively advance in the second *Critique*. Second, he is, as we have already seen, referring to incentives to obey the moral law other than respect for it and which he abandons in the *Groundwork*. Third, he refers to some 'whole end' which is more than obedience to the moral law, which will be eventually advanced as the Highest Good. The key aspect of this passage is the fourth move where Kant is again, as in *Lectures*, saying that this whole end is to be determined *a priori*. This entails that its deduction cannot draw on experience and that Kant must offer a deduction of the same rigour as that for the Categorical Imperative in the *Groundwork*. This standard of proof will form a key element in the assessment of the Highest Good in the final part of this study.

*Lectures* also contains the building blocks for constructing the Highest Good, albeit not organised into their final form. The first is the worthiness to be happy which also reinforces Kant's stance on the derivation of God from morality:

Yet on the contrary the concept of God is a *moral* concept, the *practically necessary*; for morality contains the conditions, as regards the conduct of rational beings, under which alone they can be worthy of happiness (*Lect*,28:1071).

The worthiness to be happy will play a crucial role in Kant's arguments to secure the Highest Good in his late-Critical period and again Kant previews this role here:

[I]f in the case of a creature who has conducted himself according to these eternal and immediate laws of nature and who has thus become worthy of happiness, no state can be hoped for where he participates in this happiness...then there would be a contradiction between morality and the course of nature. (*Lect*,28:1072).

In other words, Kant is arguing that to be worthy of happiness but not to receive it involves a certain incoherence, an *absurdum practicum*. Although again not explicitly terming it the Highest Good, Kant provides this excellent description of it:

Benevolence in and for itself is without limit, but it has to express itself in the apportionment of happiness *according to the proportion of worthiness in the subject*. And just *this limitation of benevolence by holiness* in apportioning happiness is *justice* (*Lect*,28:1074).

It is also noteworthy that, in the second sentence above, Kant is setting out the relationship between God's three moral properties, namely holiness, benevolence, and justice. In addition, Kant is concerned with the primacy of God's justice and expresses this through the application of the Highest Good, stating:

It is enough to expect from God's benevolence that in this life it gives us the capacity to observe the laws of morality and to become worthy of happiness. God himself, the all-benevolent, can make us worthy of his good deeds; but that he shall yet make us partakers of happiness without

our becoming worthy of his good deeds in virtue of morality – *that* he, the Just One, cannot do (*Lect*,28:1074).

This supremacy of justice is not a transient claim by Kant; we will see it again seven years later in *Failure*. Yet in *Lectures* the coupling of the concept of the Highest Good with that of God is presented at one point as less intimate than that in the first *Critique* with Kant stating that ‘God’s infinite understanding...recognised the possibility of a highest good external to himself in which morality would be the supreme principle’ (*Lect*,28:1102). This opens up the prospect of a possible separation the notion of the Highest Good from that of God. In the literature, many scholars<sup>93</sup> endorse such a secular Highest Good which avoids endorsing the practical postulation of immortality and God.

In the justification for reliance on *Lectures* reference was made to the correlation between *Lectures* and *Idea* on the subject of the Highest Good. In *Idea* Kant states that ‘he [man] should labour and work himself up so far that he might make himself worthy of well-being [happiness] through his conduct of life’ (*Idea*,8:20), once more referring to the components of what Kant will eventually term the Highest Good. Thus we have a match on this subject between three of our four primary sources which confirms that, with the Highest Good, Kant was deliberating upon a significant innovation in his thinking.

#### Anticipating the Groundwork

One can regard Kant’s moral theology which reaches its apogee in the *Religion* as being built up gradually, layer upon layer, throughout his Critical period. We have already seen how he has already started to consider the Highest Good in the first *Critique*. He puts another sod on the dyke in the *Groundwork* where he identifies reason as the ground of the moral law. However, before making that move in that work, he dismisses happiness as a possible ground for the moral law for three reasons: (i) its indeterminate nature, (ii) the likelihood that one person’s happiness is not simultaneously possible with another’s, and (iii) the fact that, if happiness was mankind’s final end, instinct would have made a better fist of it than reason does with its propensity to clash with our sensible nature (cf. *GW*,4:395). However, these themes were not first aired in the *Groundwork* of 1785; they can be seen two years earlier in *Lectures*, but again not yet fully worked through<sup>94</sup> as indicated by the following:

In the idea of happiness...we have no concept of the whole, but rather we *only compose it out of parts*. And just for this reason we cannot direct our actions according to an idea of happiness, because such a whole cannot be thought by us (*Lect*,28:1057)

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<sup>93</sup> Half of the scholars whose work on the Highest Good was sampled for this study (see footnote 13) endorse such a secular version.

<sup>94</sup> A view shared by Duncan (2012,976).

This speaks to the indeterminate nature of happiness. The following not only confirms this but also suggests that, if we had happiness in this life, we would not need another life (immortality) to provide the happiness that Kant holds must be delivered in some setting in proper proportion to that worthiness to be happy which he equates with being in a virtuous state.

If moral duties were only based on feelings, or on the prospect of happiness – so that just by fulfilling them I would become happy already, not merely worthy of happiness...then well-being would already exist in the present course of things as the effect of good conduct and I would not need to count only on a happy state in the future[.] (*Lect*,28:1072)

It is important that here Kant is dismissing duties motivated by the prospect of happiness. Yet he is arguing that Highest Good obtains when the degree of virtue (obeying the moral law) and happiness are in the proper proportion. To dismiss the prospect of happiness as an incentive yet include it in the Highest Good without being an incentive is an extremely narrow path for Kant to tread.

Various passages which anticipate arguments contained in the *Groundwork* have already been highlighted in this chapter but there is one section in particular (*Lect*,28:1099-1100) where Kant rehearses two key moves he will later make in greater detail. Firstly, consider ‘only insofar as they can be regarded as members of this universal system do rational creatures have personal worth. For a good will is something good in and for itself, therefore something *absolutely* good, everything else is only a conditioned good’ (*Lectures*). Compare this with ‘It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a good will’ from the *Groundwork* (GW,4:393). In seeing agreement between these texts I am following Duncan who states:

Despite the fact that the *Lectures* predate the *Groundwork* we find Kant saying almost exactly the same thing about the nature of the unconditional good in the *Lectures* as he does in the *Groundwork* and he connects this idea of the will as unconditionally good to the purpose of the world (2012,975).

Secondly consider ‘[b]ut morality, through which a system of ends is possible, gives to the rational creature a worth in and for itself by making it a member of this great realm of all ends’ (*Lectures*). This clearly anticipates Kant’s exposition in the *Groundwork* of the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative which assigns worth to every rational being and the third formulation which explicitly includes the term “kingdom of ends”.

In sum, Kant introduced three major innovations in this period of transition which all came to full bloom in his late-Critical period. Although he had yet to demonstrate the rational foundation of the moral law, he had started to link his concept of God with morality, in

particular showing how the notion of God flows from the moral law and not the reverse. He began his consideration of the Highest Good, the eventual results of which will enable him to put forward his own 'authentic' theodicy. For this study too, these results will be of prime importance as they will form the hub of my assessment of the success or otherwise of Kant's own efforts in theodicy. Lastly, the outlines of some the key arguments to be presented in the *Groundwork* have begun to emerge. That the eventual system of morality that will be laid out in that work is based on our rational nature rather than our sensible one will also serve to guide Kant's distinctive efforts in theodicy.

Taking the three sections of the chapter together, we have seen that Kant's thought on topics pertinent to theodicy were subject to development in his early-Critical period. Whilst not abandoning significant aspects of his pre-Critical stance, he nevertheless changed his view on other aspects and provided valuable first insights into yet other matters which will be central in the final period to be considered in this study – the late-Critical. Regarded as a whole, the early part of the Critical period was indeed a time of transition for Kant on theodically relevant topics.

## **CHAPTER 6 - PULLING THE STRANDS TOGETHER**

In the previous chapter the transitional nature of Kant's thought on theodicy was illustrated. But arising from these considerations, there are two questions of consequence which must be addressed. In Chapter 3, I argued that in his pre-Critical period, Kant regarded philosophical theodicies as possible. So we must now ask whether that is still the case. I will contend that they are. Further, whilst we have described the period presently under consideration as one of transition, towards what is it a transition? In other words, although Kant's thoughts are undergoing change, can we yet see their destination, or, indeed, do they cohere sufficiently for a destination to be identified at all? On this, I will argue that, whilst a general movement in a moral direction can be discerned, no destination can yet be identified and, further, that there are significant unresolved tensions in Kant's theodical views. The aim of this chapter is to fully address these two important questions.

### ***Is Philosophical Theodicy Still Possible for Kant?***

It is no secret that Kant, in his late-Critical period with *Failure*, rejected philosophical theodicy *in toto*. I contend that in this early-Critical period, in contrast, Kant continued to see such theodicies as possible. That he did not reject them in this period raises or reinforces two broad points of importance.

First, Kant's change in stance on philosophical theodicy did not coincide with the Copernican turn in his epistemology. Whilst significant for this study, this is not a new claim in the literature, having been advanced, for example by Christophe Schulte (1991) and Duncan (cf.2012,973) who points out that *Lectures*, *Conjectural Beginning* and *Idea* all post-date the Copernican turn. As will shortly be seen, there is much material in these works not only to support the stance that Kant still regarded philosophical theodicy as possible and but which also illustrates the range of theodicy types that he still saw as feasible.

Second, the effect of this time lag in his change of stance on theodicy appears to be in conflict with Kant's Critical epistemology since the theodicies which Kant appears to still support rely, at least in part, on knowledge of God which Kant in the first *Critique* asserts is impossible. This aspect will be explored in the following section of this chapter where unresolved tensions from Kant's early-Critical period are considered. Both points demand that my contention be substantiated that Kant saw philosophical theodicy still as feasible in his early-Critical period.

The first example of philosophical theodicy is drawn from *Lectures*:

That the world created by God is the *best* of all possible worlds is clear from the following reason. If a better world than the one willed by God were possible, then a *better will* than the divine will would also have been possible. For indisputably that will is better which chooses what is better, But if a better will is possible, then so is a being who could express this better will. And this being would therefore be more perfect and better than God. But that is a contradiction; for in God is *omnitudo realitatis* [all reality] (*Lect*,28:1079).

As stated previously, to endorse the notion that our world is the best possible despite the presence of moral evil is to imply a theodicy, namely that this world is the best that God could have instantiated from amongst all the possible worlds contemplated by Him. Thus God is not responsible for the unavoidable residual evil in the world. In addition, Kant is reinforcing his position with the secondary argument that, if a better world was indeed possible, then the creator of our world could not be the entity which contains all perfection and therefore not God.

At the same point in *Lectures*, Kant offers two further short reflections on theodicy. Firstly, he praises the astronomers who have shown that our world is but a part of a much greater whole. This enables him to advance what I have previously termed a limited view theodicy, or more strictly speaking, a limited view defence. Despite the conflict with the passage above, Kant is recorded as saying that 'if our terrestrial globe were the whole world, it would be difficult to know it to be the best and to hold this by conviction' (*Lect*,28:1097). But because the astronomers have 'taught us modesty' regarding our knowledge of the entirety of creation, it is possible to defend God by taking the line that, despite the acknowledged evil in that part of

creation known to us, it is possible that creation *in toto* is still the best possible. However, this is a defence of God rather than a full theodicy as the argument advanced cannot acquit God of responsibility for evil in creation. It only shows that we do not know enough to convict Him either. Secondly, and exceptionally briefly, Kant toys with the idea that 'on this earth the sum of pain and the sum of good might just about balance each other'. If he had persisted with this line, a theodicy which sought to excuse God for evil because the net effect of good and evil was zero would have been possible. Kant revisits such a calculus later in *Failure*, but only to dismiss it and any theodicy based thereon.

Additional support for theodicy in *Lectures* occurs when Kant states that '[t]hus we can and must assume for reason's sake that everything in the world is arranged for the best, and that the whole of everything in the world is arranged for the best, and that the whole of everything existing is the best possible one' (*Lect*,28:1098). This clearly endorses a Leibnizian best possible world but what is striking is that Kant is presenting it here as a demand of reason. Moreover in the continuation, Kant then ties this best possible world to natural science with the statement that 'if I cannot be sure that the laws governing the course of nature are the best ones, then I must also doubt whether in such a world true well-being will eventually be combined with my worthiness to be happy'. We can not only note that the latter part is a description of the Highest Good but also that there is nothing inconsistent between Kant's claim here with respect to the laws of nature and his early-career endorsement of Newtonian mechanics.

In the previous chapter, under the heading "Early Critical Change", the relationship between man's growth in reason and his responsibility for moral evil was fully discussed. There is little value in revisiting that discussion in detail but it is still worthwhile to underscore the outcome. This was that Kant, in effect, was putting forward a "moral progression" theodicy. Whilst we saw that Kant envisaged a historical process occurring which was put in place by God, man nevertheless was responsible for the evil committed during his progress towards moral perfection, not the 'wise creator' who initiated the process. Such a theodicy recognises that evil occurs but this is discounted because of the eventual result. However, the discrepancy between evil being used as a means to the good by man and its possible use by God was noted with even the competition arising from 'unsocial sociability' being harnessed in such a cause. We saw in the preceding chapter that there was textual evidence for this to be found at *Lect*,28:1078-79, *Idea*,8:21, and *CB*,8:115-16. If such evidence is accepted, Kant was advancing an argument that amounts to a theodicy, but again, without using that word. Further in *Idea*, with respect to the development of reason, we find Kant stating:

[T]here will be opened a consoling prospect into future...in which the human species is represented in the remote distance as finally working itself upward toward the condition in which

all germs nature has placed in it can be fully developed and its vocation here on earth can be fulfilled. Such a *justification* of nature - or better, of *providence* - is no unimportant motive for choosing a particular viewpoint for considering the world (*Idea*,8:30).

Here, for Johannes Brachtendorf (2002,382), Kant is making an explicit appeal to the language of theodicy to describe the development of reason and morality in the species, not the individual. Kant could also be suggesting an instrumental or greater good theodicy when he states '[b]ut ill is necessary if the human being is to have wish and an aspiration toward a better state, and at the same time to learn how to strive to become worthy of it' (*Lect*,28:1081) but this cannot be firmly established since we are given no guidance on whether the ill being referred to is natural harm, which would not require a theodicy, or the suffering which results from moral evil which would. I incline towards the latter reading because Kant offers another instrumental account which definitely includes morality:

But to sacrifice one's peace, one's powers and one's advantage when the eternal laws of morality demand it, that is true virtue, and worthy of a future recompense! If there were no disproportion at all between morality and well-being in this world, there would be no opportunity for us to be truly virtuous (*Lect*,28:1081).

Here, the instrumental role that evil performs is the creation of conditions which demand that we act in a moral way, whether we decide to do so or not. Indeed, Kant is almost suggesting that we could not be moral without injustice in the world. This extract also has the tone that evil can provide the necessary background to make the good stand out more clearly or shine more brightly like a jewel. Such a notion is not new having previously been expressed by Leibniz in his *Theodicy* with '[a]nd is it not most often necessary that a little evil render the good more discernible, that is to say, greater?' (§12/H130). Whilst these may not be attractive accounts for some, they are nevertheless reasoned explanations which would meet the requirement for a theodicy as set out in the Introduction.

Kant offers yet another take on a possible theodicy when he states that '[i]f God commands something for which we cannot understand the reason, then this is because of the limitations of our cognition, and not because of the nature of the commandment itself' (*Lect*,28:1114). Here, as we have seen before, Kant must tread a fine line. Whilst we cannot prematurely give up our efforts to understand without being accused of lazy reason, this consideration could ground a "limited view" defence. Later, Kant will show in *Failure* that what we cannot do is defend moral evil by calling on a different standard of right or wrong for God.

In considering the evidence presented so far, the reader might not agree with my interpretation of the cited passages, namely that they amount to philosophical theodicies or at least provide the bases on which these could be constructed. However, I contend that this is



not possible with the final passage now put forward. The inclusion of such a long passage is warranted because it is philosophical theodicy pure and simple:

If in our discussion of the truth that God created the whole world for the best, it was necessary to reply to the objection how moral evil could be found in such a best world, then it is now also our duty to show why God has not prevented evil, since everything is subject to his government. The possibility of deviating from the moral law must adhere to every creature. God alone is without limitations. But if every creature has needs and deficiencies, then it must also be possible that impulses of sense (for these derive from the needs) can seduce it into forsaking morality. It is self-evident that we are speaking here only of free creatures, since irrational ones have no morality. If the human being is to be a free creature and responsible for the development and cultivation of his abilities and predispositions, then it must also be within his power to follow or shun the laws of morality. His use of freedom has to depend on him, even if it should wholly conflict with the plan God designed for the moral world. By divine decree God could have given the human being overriding powers and motives sufficient to make him a member of the great realm of ends. Hence if God does not prevent evil in the world, he never sanctions it; it [sic] only permits it (*Lect*,28:1113)

There can be no doubt that Kant is here advancing a free will theodicy with a clearly Leibnizian twist in the final sentence with its reference to the antecedent and consequent will of God. However, when the contention that Kant still advanced philosophical theodicies in his early-Critical period is accepted, this does not end our deliberations.

### ***Unresolved Tensions***

The previous chapter dealing with Kant's early-Critical period illustrated its transitional nature. Above, I have argued that successful philosophical theodicies were still possible for Kant. But with those two steps completed, we are still unable to now move forward to consider the third and final period, the late-Critical, as that would be to sweep under the carpet some significant tensions which remain unresolved. They are unresolved in two senses; firstly Kant does not resolve them and secondly, this author is not able to offer a resolution on Kant's behalf by drawing on the primary material considered thus far in this study. All that can be done for the present is to highlight the issues and note that they must be again addressed when the final, late-Critical, period is considered.

### ***The Nature of Evil***

We have seen that in his early pre-Critical works Kant did not contest the prevailing notion of metaphysical evil conceived as limitation, namely that evil is not ontologically positive but is an expression of the shortfall from complete goodness resulting from the limitations inherent in created beings. However, I have argued in Part A that Kant's thought on evil had progressed by 1763 and *Negative Magnitudes*. The interpretation which I offered was that, at that time, Kant put forward an account of evil as ontologically positive, namely as something with a positive

ground (a real existent) but with a negative value. However, as he had not rejected evil as limitation by this stage of his career, there were two forms of evil to consider. Such an interpretation, which could also be drawn from *Lect*,28:1113 above, is challenged in *Lectures* with the following passage where an apparently unequivocal endorsement of evil as limitation would seem to preclude any other form:

Thus evil in the world can be regarded as *incompleteness in the development of the germ toward the good*. Evil has *no special* germ; for it is *mere negation* and consists **only** in the *limitation of the good*. It is nothing beyond this, other than incompleteness in the development of the germ to the good out of uncultivatedness. (*Lect*,28:1078). (My emphasis in bold).

When Kant's late-Critical writing on theodicy is examined, we will see that Kant no longer accepted metaphysical evil conceived as limitation but regarded evil as something with a positive ground. Whilst such a stance supports my argument from *Negative Magnitudes*, it does nothing to explain Kant's apparent exclusion here of evil as ontologically positive.<sup>95</sup> One possible move is to abandon my argument based on *Negative Magnitudes* but, as I see no reason to do that, there is a difficulty which cannot be resolved at this stage of Kant's career. Also puzzling is that if evil as limitation is confirmed, God's responsibility for evil increases which is definitely not Kant's intention. Kant has here described the limits as necessary which is correct since creatures *qua* creatures are limited. Taken simply, this means that man is limited and could not be otherwise, but then cannot be held to be morally responsible for evil. Further, if man is not morally responsible, is there any such thing as *moral* evil at all? Should that be case, the search for a successful theodicy would be moot. No moral evil, no need for theodicy. That a resolution must be found eventually needs no elaboration since to build a theodicy without settling the question of evil is to build on sand. This matter will be revisited in Part C (Late-Critical) when a solution will be advanced by differentiating between evil and its ground.

### *The Ontological Status of God*

Those familiar with the first *Critique* might wonder at the inclusion of a discussion of God's ontological status at this stage in the study. They could justifiably point to where Kant provides the clearest answer to the question whether the ideal of the highest being is regulative or constitutive. He does so in that part of the Doctrine of the Elements entitled 'Discovery and explanation of the dialectical illusion in all transcendental proofs of the existence of a necessary being' (A614-620). It is worthwhile outlining his argument in this matter as it seems

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<sup>95</sup> That Kant is reverting back to an earlier position is also implicitly challenged by Duncan in his 2012 paper in which he argues that Kant made a one-time change from evil as a limitation in 1790 as a result of the work of C.C.E. Schmid when he (Kant) recognised that evil as a limitation of creation would not only absolve Man from evil but place responsibility for it solely at God's door.

to provide a settled view on the ontology of God at the start of Kant's Critical period. The illusion referred to is the hypostatizing of necessary and highest reality which for Kant can only be ideas. Further, the concept of a necessary being sets up a significant dilemma. On the one hand, when something is regarded as existing, then 'one can find no way around the conclusion that something [else] also exists necessarily'.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, there is no existent about which we cannot think of its non-being and, for Kant, this results in a situation where 'I can never **complete** the existing without assuming a necessary being, but I can never **begin** with this [necessary] being' (A616). Because of this contradiction Kant holds that neither of these principles can be objective. They can only be 'subjective principles of reason' being merely heuristic and *regulative* which he confirms in the following:

The ideal of the highest being is, according to these consideration, nothing other than a regulative principle of reason, to regard all combination in the world as if it arose from an all-sufficient necessary cause, so as to ground on that cause the rule of a unity that is systematic and necessary according to universal laws; but it is not an assertion of an existence that is necessary in itself (A619).

That would appear to settle the issue. Namely, that for Kant at the time of the first edition of the first *Critique*, the concept of the highest being, God, was a regulatory principle. He saw our mistake is to 'represent this formal principle...as constitutive and think of this unity hypostatistically'. In this way, a regulative principle is turned into a constitutive one. However, that is not the end of matter when we check whether Kant adheres to this line later in the first *Critique*. At multiple places later in the first *Critique* Kant does so, again describing the concept of God as a regulative ideal. Two examples will suffice here and these, to my mind, can only be read in a regulative manner.

The first presents God as a unifying focus:

Thus they [the transcendental ideas, which include God] should not be assumed in themselves, but their reality should only hold as that of a schema of the regulative principle for the systematic unity of all cognitions of nature (A671).

The second again emphasises God as an intellectual focus:

Thus the transcendental and single determinate concept of God that merely speculative reason gives us is in the most precise sense deistic, i.e., reason does not furnish us with the objective validity of such a concept, but only with the idea of something on which all empirical reality grounds its highest and necessary unity[.] (A675)

If God as a regulative ideal was Kant's final position on this topic, the challenge in constructing an eventual theodicy would be serious. Irrespective of whether one uses the tripartite Leibnizian taxonomy of evil or the one put forward in this study on Kant's behalf in the pre-

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<sup>96</sup> This is the basis of the cosmological proof for the existence of God.

Critical Part A, they share the common element of moral evil which must be accounted for in any attempted theodicy where reason demands the reconciliation of such evil with God. If God were to be purely regulative, one would be trying to reconcile existent moral evil with an ideal in a philosophical system. In other words, in such a theodicy one would be seeking to account for evil again *as if* <sup>97</sup>God existed. Alternatively, one could say that no explanation would even be needed since God as an ideal merely sets a unifying standard for moral behaviour for humans to live up to. If this line was adopted, theodicy would then be largely redundant. Kant did not attempt to solve such a puzzle at this point in his career and neither do we on his behalf. However, if one puzzle is avoided then another serious one soon becomes apparent because the first *Critique* also contains material which, in my judgement, reads in a realist manner, an example being:

Hence everyone also regards the moral laws as **commands**, which, however, they could not be if they did not connect appropriate consequences with their rule a priori, and thus carry with them **promises** and **threats**. This, however, they could not do if they did not lie in a necessary being, as the highest good<sup>98</sup>, which alone can make possible such a purposive unity (A811).

This is realist in tone because a regulative ideal cannot issue promises and threats. It can also be noted that this passage suggests once more an incentive to obey the moral law resulting from the fear of threats or promise of rewards. These would be classed as hypothetical imperatives in the *Groundwork* a few years later, and so rejected as the moral law's foundation. In that later work the only allowable incentive is respect for the moral law founded on categorical imperatives.<sup>99</sup> This realist tone is reinforced at A813 in a passage cited above (p.88) in which Kant appears to be advancing an existent. So despite Kant's explicit assertion at A614-20 that the highest being is a regulative ideal when it comes to applying this outcome in practice, the situation is far from clear and it is here that the unresolved tension lies. We now seem to have two separate concepts of God in play, a regulative ideal (anti-realist) and a constitutive one (realist), namely one for whom some kind of existence claim is being made. Any attempt at a reasoned explanation of the co-existence of God and evil in a theodicy clearly requires a stable concept of God. However, in my view, Kant is not providing one. It will be seen when his late-Critical period is considered that Kant does not confirm either

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<sup>97</sup> Again, the phrase made famous by Hans Vaihinger (1911) with his *Philosophie des Als Ob* where he saw such a construction as no more than a 'useful fiction'.

<sup>98</sup> Here Kant is referring to God as the "Highest Original Good". When the term "Highest Good" is used in this study without qualification it refers the combination of virtue and happiness in correct proportion.

<sup>99</sup> The reader could also question whether Kant is here trespassing on territory put out of bounds by his own Critical epistemology since he has shown that we cannot have knowledge of God, yet God seems here to have promise and threat issuing attributes.

alternative as outlined here. Rather, he depends on a third way, the “moral proof” of God’s existence contained in the second *Critique*.<sup>100</sup>

*The attributes of God and their relation to Critical Epistemology.*

Having considered God's ontological status and in so doing discussing some of His possible attributes, a wider examination of the latter is valuable. But how is God as an ideal to be characterised without making a knowledge claim which is inadmissible following Kant's Critical epistemology? We saw how Kant thought that whilst we could not have knowledge of God we could nevertheless have an idea of God and that in Kant’s terminology an ideal of pure reason is an exemplar of such an idea which we would wish to somehow describe. Can these seemingly contrary notions be held onto concurrently?

At the start of the first section of *Lectures*, Transcendental Theology (*Lect*,28:1013), Kant is recorded as laying out ‘three *constitutive* concepts’ of God (my emphasis).

1. God is an original being (*ens originarium*) which is not derived from any other being. Kant considers that this concept of God is the basis of cosmo-theology and ‘from this concept...I infer the absolute necessity and highest perfection of God.’
2. God is the highest being (*ens summum*). For Kant this suggests a being with every reality (an *ens realissimum*) and he sees such a being as the foundation of onto-theology.<sup>101</sup>
3. God is the being of all beings (*ens entium*) and is ‘the highest ground of all other things, as the being from which everything else is derived’.

Kant considers that all other ‘predicates [of] God in what follows...will only be individual determinations of those fundamental concepts’. This is consistent with Kant’s criticism of Baumgarten concerning God’s attributes which was highlighted previously when establishing *Lectures*' reliability. Moreover, the third concept is consistent with Kant’s reasoning in the *Only Possible Argument* where he held that God could be argued to exist as the ground of all possibility and since what exists is possible, therefore God exists. This link to the argumentation of the *Only Possible Argument* is strengthened when Kant states:

[W]e have already shown that we can have no insight through our reason into the existence of a being whose non-existence is impossible, in a word, we have no insight into an existence which is absolutely necessary, and yet our reason urges us on *to assume* to such a being as a *hypothesis*

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<sup>100</sup> The phrase “moral proof of God’s existence” is used here as shorthand. The question of whether this is an actual moral proof of the existence of God or a moral argument for the necessary belief in the existence of God is passed over for the present.

<sup>101</sup> These descriptions match those given in the first Critique (A632)

*which is subjectively necessary for us*, because otherwise we could provide no ground why anything in general is possible (*Lect*,28:1063).

However, this apparent linkage to *Only Possible Argument* presents us with a puzzle given Kant's prior rejection in the first edition of the first *Critique* of the three, and to his mind, the only three, theoretical arguments for God's existence. In my view, the puzzle can only be solved if Kant is read as advancing a necessary being as an intellectual focus rather than an existent, again another fine line to tread. Moreover, if this solution to the puzzle is accepted, it seems to be an argument for a regulative highest being and so we are once more left with Kant advancing both a constitutive and a regulative view of God/highest being in the same work. This was the problem signalled above when considering the concept(s) of God in play in the first *Critique*.

The earlier use of '*constitutive*' also raises a significant issue. The constitutive concepts above were set out *after* the publication of the first edition of the first *Critique* where Kant asserts states that we can have no *knowledge* of God. So surely it is a misrepresentation of Kant's position to have him setting out *constitutive* as opposed to *regulative* concepts here? In my view, this objection can be accommodated if we interpret what is being advanced not as constitutive of God but of the *idea* of God. In other words, if Kant is read as saying that the idea of God *consists* in these three sub-concepts and that he is not making a knowledge claim that God possesses the attributes. However, an altogether safer approach is not to offer an attempted reconciliation on Kant's behalf at all, especially in the light of his remark:

Hence the totality of what speculative reason can teach us concerning the existence of God consists in showing us how we must necessarily hypothesise this existence, but speculative reason does not show us how God's existence could be demonstrated with apodictic certainty (*Lect*,28:1036).

In line with this, Kant makes a number of statements in *Lectures* which utilise this concept of God. First, linking back to the laws of nature, Kant states: '[b]ut if we ask who has so firmly established the laws of nature and so limited its operations, then we will come to God as the supreme cause of the entirety of reason and nature' (*Lect*,28:997). This confirmed where Kant expresses the dependence of all things on God this time through His essence:

For by regarding God as the *ens originarium* containing in itself the ground of all possible things, we derive their matter, in which their reality itself lies, from the divine essence. Thus we make the essence of things themselves derivative from God, that is, from his essence (*Lect*,28:1035).

So, in sum, the unresolved issue here is that, whilst Kant's God is an ideal of pure reason, any description of Him which is required to ground a theodicy seems to require a knowledge which conflicts with his Critical epistemology. One possible explanation for the mismatch is that in

*Lectures*, Kant had to trim his sails to the prevailing religio-political wind. However, both Christophe Schulte (1991,373) and Duncan (2012,975n) dismiss this possibility by pointing out that the work is based on lectures given late in the intellectually liberal reign of Frederick the Great and therefore before Wöllner's repressive 1788 Religious Edict.

### Other Issues

If those are the major challenges, then it is worthwhile briefly recapping other discrepancies which were signalled in the previous chapter. Firstly, when considering the Best Possible World, we saw Kant appearing to introduce an argument for it which did not involve God when he was recorded *in Lectures* as stating that 'it is possible to recognise the doctrine of the best world from maxims of reason alone, independently of all theology and without its being necessary to resort to the wisdom of a creator in proof of it' (*Lect*,28:1098). Such an argument would seem to be incompatible with the essentially Leibnizian argument which Kant endorsed elsewhere in *Lectures*. Secondly, the effect of the development of reason on morality was considered. The possibility was raised there that, whilst man cannot use evil as a means to the good, God might do that when placing in man a spirit of competition which all too often brings man's undesirable qualities to the fore. This re-raised the worrisome question of whether God and man play by different moral rules. Finally, when discussing both the best possible world and God's attributes drawn from morality, the possible incentives to obey the moral law were considered. We saw, at some points in both *Lectures* and the first *Critique*, that Kant stressed the moral law's self-sufficiency and at others, that the concept of God was needed to provide the required incentive to obey the moral law. Is the moral law self-sufficient or not? When added to the three major issues considered above, we are left with a considerable agenda of challenges to address.

Together, these challenges form a formidable obstacle to any effort to present Kant's thought on theodicy as one of ordered progress. As stated above, I hold that Kant does not provide any satisfying answers to these points and neither can we do so on his behalf. But that would be an unsatisfactory note on which to end consideration of Kant's early-Critical period. When the period is considered *in toto*, what conclusion can be drawn? Whilst I have shown that it was a transitional period with respect to theodicy, we must ask again the question presented in the introduction to this chapter. This was whether Kant's views are pointing towards any specific outcome, despite his move in a general direction towards arguments based on morality. In my view, they do not. Although the pre-Critical period was exploratory for Kant, it is possible to see his position on theodicy as nonetheless relatively ordered. In contrast, at end of the current period, his views appear fragmentary and there are simply too many significant loose

ends. The most significant of these is that stated in the introduction to this chapter, namely, that the theodicies which Kant appears to still support rely, at least in part, on knowledge of God which Kant asserts as impossible in the first *Critique*. Epistemology had raced ahead; theodicy lagged behind. The time-lag is not to be explained. It was not just a case of theodicy catching up because Kant had been occupied with other matters. No, in 1783/4 in *Lectures*, *after* the publication of the first edition of the first *Critique*, Kant is recorded as expressing views seemingly incompatible with his Critical epistemology. By the end of Kant's career his thinking on theodicy was certainly not fragmented and did not have loose ends. There are two ways in which this shift could have been achieved. Kant could have resolved the challenges adumbrated here, tying up the loose ends, but he did not. Instead, he rendered these concerns about his early-Critical period redundant by advancing his own unique theodicy which reflected a stable view of God and which did not conflict with his Critical epistemology. Tracing its development and offering a critique of his theodicy's success (or otherwise) forms this study's last major part.



## PART C - THE LATE-CRITICAL PERIOD - A TIME OF CONCLUSION

### Introductory Remarks

In this third period, Kant adopts his definitive stance on theodicy in *Failure*. He takes an unequivocal position on epistemological grounds against the philosophical theodicies to which, at least in part, he had previously subscribed. He also advanced his own 'authentic' theodicy which, I will argue, is ultimately based on his controversial concept of the Highest Good, a particular combination of virtue and happiness<sup>102</sup>. His last major contribution to the subject of theodicy is made in *Religion* where he sets out his theory of radical evil under which humans are wholly accountable for moral evil, as indeed they must be for a successful theodicy to be constructed. In the early part of the Critical period, Kant's theodical thought exhibited unresolved tensions between it and his epistemology but in this late part, with its emphasis on practical as opposed to theoretical reason, these tensions dissolve. They do so not by being addressed individually but by being overtaken by developments in Kant's thought.

## CHAPTER 7 -THE FAILURE OF PHILOSOPHICAL THEODICIES

### Setting up the Challenge

It is useful to start the examination by recalling Kant's definition of theodicy. It is 'the defence of the highest wisdom against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counter-purposive in the world' (*Failure*,8:255). Although a shorthand version, namely the reconciliation of God and evil, will sometimes be used, it is worthwhile re- emphasising the full version where it is our *reason* that provides the challenge. Reason's primacy is again stressed by Kant when he describes his examination of philosophical theodicies as a 'juridical process...instituted before the tribunal of reason' (*Failure*,8:255). Here Kant is referring to his analogy of a trial in which there are four parties. There is God, the defendant, who stands trial on the charge of responsibility for evil in the world. Next there is theodicy's defender or author who strives for God's acquittal, followed by the prosecutor or complainant who wishes to show that theodicies fail. Finally, there is a supposedly impartial judge who will decide on the case purely on the grounds of reason.

Also God's defenders cannot "pull rank" on reason by claiming that reason is not fit to judge in matters affecting the divine; in Kant's words 'he [God's defender] is not therefore allowed to dismiss the latter [the complaint against God] in the course of the process of law through a

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<sup>102</sup> e.g. see A810

decree of incompetency of the tribunal of human reason' (*Failure*,8:255). Kant's stance here is consistent with that in the *Groundwork* that there is only one moral law, not one for God and one for man. In turn, this is consistent with Kant's insistence on reason's primacy. As there can only be one reason, and the moral law is based on reason, there must be only one moral law.

It is my view that in his examination of philosophical theodicies, Kant is not putting forward his own arguments for theodicies only then to find their defects. Rather, he is reviewing and eventually rejecting various attempted theodicies that were current in his time. As only to be expected, Kant works in a systematic manner. He first identifies three categories of theodicy which its supporters could advance.

- a. 'Whatever in the world we judge counter-purposive is not so' (*Failure*,8:255). This is equivalent to saying that what appears as evil is not evil. Clearly, if there is no evil, there is no work for theodicy to do since it has nothing for which to provide a reasoned explanation.
- b. 'If there is any such thing [as evil], that it must be judged not at all as an intended effect but as the unavoidable consequence of the nature of things' (*Failure*,8:255). This is immediately recognisable as a key concept from Leibnizian theodicy where, in the best possible world, God does not intend evil *antecedently* but *consequently* permits the evil which results. Further, it was this which underlay the first 'serious error' with which Kant struggled in Reflection 3705 as long ago as 1753.
- c. 'It must be considered not as an intended effect of the creator of all things but, rather, merely of those beings in the world to whom something can be imputed, i.e. of human beings' (*Failure*,8:255). This is a special case of b. above, but not dealing with the nature of things in general but rather specifically with human beings and their possible moral responsibility. This category also suggests God's consequent permission of evil. It will be seen that, in discussing concrete cases in this category, Kant also considers the nature of evil. However, b. and c. present those who would advance such theodicies with a significant challenge. Namely, to explain how evil is an unintended consequence of God's decision to create but responsibility for it nevertheless does not ultimately attach to Him but rather to those He created.

However, before considering these categories, Kant dismisses two whole classes of theodicy with the following:

Yet there is one thing he [God's advocate] need not attend to, namely a proof of God's wisdom from what experience of this world teaches; for in this he would simply not succeed, since omniscience would be required to recognise in a given world (as gives itself to cognition in

experience) that perfection of which we could say with certainty that absolutely none other is possible in creation[.] (*Failure*,8:256).

It is worthwhile making explicit the two classes that this passage excludes. Firstly, Kant is saying that any attempted theodicy based on our experience in the sensible world will fail. Surprisingly, Kant does not explain why at this stage but doing so is a straightforward matter. In the first *Critique*, Kant established the boundaries of knowledge and that, whilst we can think of God as an ideal of pure reason, we can have no knowledge of Him. Constructing a successful theoretical theodicy based on our sensible experience would demand reconciliation of that experience with God's attributes and hence a knowledge claim in respect of these attributes. For this reason, such attempted theodicies must *necessarily* fail. Secondly, we can see that Kant is dismissing any theodicy based on an a posteriori claim that our world is the best possible. Here not only are we limited to our sensible experience to debar knowledge of God, but, to compare worlds, we would need omniscience. This we do not possess; only God is claimed to have this property. However, a defence of God, falling short of a full theodicy and thus insufficient for either His acquittal or conviction, could still be attempted based on the limited view which Kant describes.

Kant next introduces two more triads. The first concerns the nature of the counter-purposive in the world which is seemingly 'opposed to the wisdom of its creator'.

- I. 'The absolutely counter-purposive or what cannot be condoned or desired either as end or means... [this is] the morally counter-purposive, evil proper, sin' (*Failure*,8:256). This is the same as the moral evil from the taxonomy which was constructed on Kant's behalf when his pre-Critical period was examined.
- II. 'The conditionally counter-purposive, or what can indeed never co-exist with the wisdom of a will as an end, yet can do so as a means...[this is] the physically counter-purposive, ill (pain). – But now, there still is a purposiveness in the proportion of ill to moral evil...namely in the conjunction of ills and pains, as penalties, with evil, as crime.' (*Failure*,8:257). It is important to note that here that Wood and Di Giovanni have used "ill" and not "evil" in their translation. This is correct as Kant uses *Übel* not *Böse*. This supports the argument advanced earlier that Kant, prior to *Failure*, had rejected physical evil as a punishment for moral evil, and indeed, had shown that physical evil is not evil but rather natural harm, or, as here, physical ill. However, two points arise. The first is that it must be again stressed that Kant is not putting forward his own views but evaluating theodicies common in his time and the evils addressed by them. In Kant's time, rejecting natural harm as divine punishment was far from universal. The second is that there is a potential conflict between Kant's wholehearted

endorsement of Newtonian mechanics in his pre-Critical period on which his denial of physical evil was based and epistemological limits now established in the early-Critical first *Critique*. It will be recalled that Kant adopted these mechanics as the description of the laws of nature put in place by God and then conserved in the universe by Him. Does this suggest that to ascribe this to God is to claim knowledge of Him? I consider that this problem can be discounted as Kant is not claiming to know God as He is but rather recognising the lawfulness of His action in creation.

- III. '[A] kind of counter-purposiveness must be thinkable in the world, namely the disproportion between crimes and penalties in the world.' This flows from II. in that the desired 'proportion of ill to moral evil' is absent from the world and this is injustice. However, in *Failure* Kant in considering injustice, is principally concerned with the negative aspect, namely that the evil escape suitable punishment in this world rather than the positive. The latter is that the proper proportion between obedience to the moral law (virtue) and well-being (happiness) is maintained. This relationship is nevertheless a central concern for Kant as will be seen when the controversial issue of the Highest Good is examined later in the study. However, it can be observed that this concern with the lack of a proper proportion did not make its first appearance with Kant. Leibniz had clearly recognised this mismatch earlier in his *Theodicy*:

[F]or one cannot deny that there is in the world physical evil (that is, suffering) and moral evil (that is, crime) and even that physical evil is not always distributed here on earth according to the proportion of moral evil, as it seems that justice demands. (§43/H98).

The second triad is God's moral properties. These are unchanged from those Kant developed in *Lectures* and those set out in the second *Critique* at *CPR*,5:131n. This means that Kant is making his assessment of philosophical theodicies against the same criteria as in *Lectures*, where he saw such theodicies as succeeding. In contrast, in *Failure* he saw them failing, a crucial turnaround. The key feature of this particular triad, however, is that Kant sets them up, one for one, in direct opposition to the types of counter-purposiveness he has set out in the previous triad<sup>103</sup>.

- '[T]he holiness of the author of the world, as *law-giver* (creator) in opposition to the moral evil in the world.' Moral evil is a would-be offence against God's holiness.

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<sup>103</sup> It is for this reason that Kant then proceeds to examine nine potential theodicies rather than twenty-seven (3<sup>3</sup>).

- '[H]is *goodness* as *ruler* (preserver) in contrast with the countless ills and pains of the rational beings of the world'. Physical evil is a would-be offence against His goodness.
- '[H]is *justice*, as *judge*, in comparison to the bad state which the disproportion between the impunity of the depraved and their crimes seems to indicate in the world'. Injustice in the world is a would-be offence against God's justice.

As Schulte (1991,382) notes, each of these evils is the negative magnitude of the corresponding attribute of God. All other combinations are excluded which means that, for example, Kant does not evaluate moral evil as a possible offence against God's goodness or justice. Whilst such exclusion can be questioned, it will be seen later that it proves immaterial to Kant's argument. Moreover, it is important to note that Kant considers the three properties to have an order of precedence in application. His argument is that 'it is that '[o]ur own pure (hence practical) reason determines this order of rank, for if legislation accommodated itself to benevolence, its dignity would no longer be there, nor a firm concept of duties' (*Failure*,8:257n). This order of precedence matches that previously set out at *Lect*,28:1073 to which Luca Fonnesu adds the following sharp observation:

The recognition of holiness as the most important attribute of God agrees with the Kantian conception of ethical religion: holiness characterises a morally perfect being for whom the moral law is not an imperative but the actual law of his willing and acting (2006,768).

### The Attempted Theodicies

We can now proceed to examine the nine potential theodicies listed by Kant and his responses to them. In addition to offering my own views on these responses, I will be calling on Busche's excellent 2013 paper - 'Kant's Kritik der Theodizee - Eine Metakritik', the meta-critique being his critique of Kant's critique of the nine theodicies. Kant identifies the evaluated theodicies by combination of theodicy type and type of counter-purposiveness. This exercise can be usefully presented in a 3x3 matrix.<sup>104</sup>

**Table 2: Theodicy Matrix**

	I Moral Evil/Holiness	II Physical III/Goodness	III Injustice/Justice
<b>a</b> Denial of Evil	Theodicy Ia	Theodicy IIa	Theodicy IIIa
<b>b</b> Evil Unavoidable	Theodicy Ib	Theodicy IIb	Theodicy IIIb
<b>c</b> Evil Human Fault not that of God	Theodicy Ic	Theodicy IIc	Theodicy IIIc

<sup>104</sup> The numbering system used for the triads having been chosen to align with Kant's theodicy categorisation used in *Failure*,8:258-262. Also I wish to acknowledge Prof. Stephen Palmquist (2000) as the originator of the matrix method of presentation used here.

The first group of three attempted theodicies concerns the disfigurement of the world by moral evil. Should any of them succeed it is doubtful whether there would then be any such thing as *moral* evil to be accounted for. Supporting the taxonomy of evil advanced on Kant's behalf, is his use of the word *Böse*, evil proper, to describe moral evil, not *Übel*, harm. The ability in the German language to make this crucial distinction was commented upon earlier.

**Ia.** In this attempted theodicy it is argued that there 'is no such thing as an absolute counter-purposiveness...but there are violations only against human wisdom; divine wisdom judges these according to totally different rules, incomprehensible to us' (*Failure*,8:258). In other words, not only are God's rules and ours are not the same but also divine purposes could be being served in such a way. Kant also alludes to such reasoning in Isaiah 5:58 when reference is made to 'the ways of the most high are not our ways.' So the attempted theodicy does not so much try to reconcile moral evil with God's holiness than deny that there is moral evil *tout court*. The strength of Kant's argument against it cannot be assessed because he does not offer one but dismisses it out of hand with a counter-assertion stating that 'the vindication is worse than the complaint, [it] needs no refutation; surely it can be given freely given over to the detestation of every human being who has the least feeling for morality.' In my view, it is reasonable to judge that Kant saw that allowing this theodicy would make God morally evil to human understanding and this explains his revulsion. However, Kant declines here to use two of the weapons he himself has fashioned. Firstly, to accept this theodicy would be to claim knowledge of God's ways in having a different moral system to ours, something ruled out of bounds by the first *Critique*. Secondly, Kant declined to use the principle of one moral law for both God and man previously established in the *Groundwork* and which was thus available for his use here in *Failure*. Busche does not see a meta-critique as needed, as, in common with Schulte (1991,385) and this author, he does not consider that Kant has offered a critique in the first place. Also, Busche questions who amongst theodicy's defenders had put this one forward which to him seems more suitable to defending a tyrant than God. If its defenders are unknown, then Kant was not the first to oppose what lies at the core of this attempted theodicy, Leibniz having previously stated in his *Theodicy* 'nor is it that God's justice has other rules than the justice known of men... Universal right is the same for God and for men' (§35/H94).

**Ib.** In this second 'alleged vindication' moral evil is allowed but 'it would excuse the author of the world on the ground that it could not be prevented' (*Failure*,8:259) which is strongly reminiscent of Leibniz's treatment of God's antecedent and consequent will. Kant considers that, if this theodicy were to be granted, then again what appears to be moral evil could not be so termed as the evil would be an unavoidable part of creation rather than contingent. Kant's

counter-argument is simple but effective, namely that under such circumstances ‘we would have to cease calling it [the counter-purposiveness] “a moral evil”’. We have seen Kant distancing himself slowly but surely from Leibniz on theodicy through the two previous periods. But here, although Kant does not make it explicit, his rejection of this theodicy marks another clear break from an important aspect of Leibnizian theodicy, a conclusion shared by Brachtendorf (2002,72). Kant, however, does not deal with a significant objection to this type of theodicy i.e. that an omniscient God still would have known that unavoidable evil would ensue from His act of creation, albeit indirectly, yet He chose to create and so must shoulder at least some of the blame for the presence of evil in the world. It can be noted that this is once more the objection put by Caius to Titius in *New Elucidation* and which Kant only rebutted rather than defeated there.

**1c.** This attempted theodicy is a variant or special case of **1b**. Again moral evil is initially allowed yet the guilt rests on the human being and not on God ‘for God has merely tolerated it for just causes as a deed of human beings: in no way has he condoned it, willed or promoted it’. Kant rejects this attempted theodicy:

[T]his rejoinder incurs one and the same consequence as the previous apology...namely, since even for God it was impossible to prevent this evil without doing violence to higher and even moral ends elsewhere, the ground for this ill...must inevitably be sought in the essence of things, specifically the necessary limitations of humanity...hence the latter can also not be held responsible for it (*Failure*,8:259).

Here is the clearest indication that Kant has concluded that if evil flows from the *necessary* limitations of humans as finite creatures, they cannot at the same time be held responsible for the resultant evil in the way this theodicy would portray. Kant cannot accept this as it is a *conditio sine qua non* for him that man, and not God, is responsible for moral evil. Nevertheless, Kant's refusal to accept God's responsibility for evil is not a counter argument just a counter-assertion. However, Kant would seem to have two good arguments available here but does not make them explicit and, moreover, appears to run them together. First, he is rejecting the notion of a higher purpose which is possible through the allowance of evil. This is sufficient to dismiss the theodicy since it again involves a knowledge claim in respect of God's higher purpose inadmissible under his Critical epistemology. Nevertheless, Kant goes further and rejects the attempted theodicy not on the grounds of claimed knowledge but of evil's necessity. Here I consider him to be mistaken as he appears to equate the ground of the possibility of our doing evil with the evil itself. The former is indeed necessary since our limitations are unavoidable for man *qua* man as created being but this does not make it necessary that evil is committed. In this way, he has another cogent defence available to him

with which to argue to his desired outcome of man being responsible for evil but does not deploy it here.

Second, in rejecting this theodicy with its talk of 'the necessary limitations of humanity' it is also clear that Kant has changed his position on metaphysical evil arising from limitation. This view is shared by Schulte (1991,387) who contrasts Kant's stance here with that in *Lectures*. Further, Schulte has identified in Kant's *Nachlaß* an exceptionally clear statement of why, for Kant, metaphysical and physical evil must be discounted:

If everything was based on the sensibility of our nature, then physical or metaphysical harm would be the cause of evil. But then no evil would be our fault but the fault of nature. The accountability rests on the concept of freedom and demands independence from the rule of nature (23:101) (my translation).

Hence the two part taxonomy of evil, metaphysical and moral, which emerged from our consideration of *Negative Magnitudes*, is now reduced to a single evil, moral. This important outcome will be examined further in Chapter 8.

Having considered the three theodicies which deal with moral evil contrasted with God's holiness, it is worthwhile drawing up an intermediate balance. A common theme can be seen both in the argument for, and in the refutation of, these theodicies **1a-c**. Firstly they either explicitly (as in **1a**.) or implicitly (in **1b**. and **1c**.) point to a higher cosmic purpose to which we are not party in order to justify evil's presence in the world. Kant rightly objects to this type of argument since it excuses moral evil by denying that there is such a thing and therefore there is nothing to accuse God of allowing. Further, if these theodicies were allowed, *Böse* would then be downgraded to *Übel*. Once more, any pretence on our part to know God's higher cosmic purposes would clearly violate the epistemological boundary set by the first *Critique*. Also, whilst the denial of moral evil would be an answer to the Problem of Evil, it would not be a theodicy as this must recognise *both* evil and God before seeking their reconciliation. It can also be noted that these attempted theodicies are *a priori* in nature rather than dealing with the experience of evil. Busche also offers an intermediate balance. He considers Kant's counter-arguments to the three theodicies to be weak but also that there is not enough evidence to convict God. However, the most important result of Kant's consideration of these theodicies is his rejection of two key aspects of Leibniz's theodicy: arguments from God's antecedent and consequent will in **1b**, and moral evil arising from our limitations in **1c**. Together, this indicates a clear break from Leibnizian theodicy.



The second theodicy group concerns 'the complaint brought against divine goodness for the ills...in this world' (*Failure*,8:259). In considering this group, it is significant that Kant now uses the word *Übel*, harm and not *Böse*, evil.

**Ila.** This theodicy attempts not so much to reconcile physical ill with God's goodness as to downplay its extent. Such a theodicy has a Leibnizian echo as in the *Theodicy* we find 'haply it may be that all evils are almost nothingness in comparison with the good things which are in the universe' (§19/H134)<sup>105</sup>. Kant describes the attempt in the following way: '[i]t is false to assume in human fates a preponderance of ill over the pleasant enjoyment of life<sup>106</sup>, for however bad someone's lot, yet everyone would rather live than be dead' (*Failure*,8:259), again a view echoed in Leibniz's *Theodicy* (cf. §13/H130). We should recall here that, under the categorisation system used by Kant, this theodicy is a combination of counter-purposiveness **II**, physical ill, and theodicy type **a**, the denial of evil, and hence is supposed to be showing that physical ill is not counter-purposive. Thus the attempted theodicy can only be trying to claim that there is no *net* physical ill. As the theodicy itself does not present an argument as such for this, Kant is surely correct in dismissing it as 'sophistry'. Busche offers another perspective, considering Kant's response to be weaker than the original theodicy. He considers it to be naive undifferentiated reasoning that is negligent on three counts. Firstly, it is highly problematic that an objective quantification of physical good and ill can be made. Secondly, should be good and ill be able to be quantified and be commensurable after all, man is unable to make such an assessment due to limited view of creation. This view is again reminiscent of Leibniz who states that '[i]t is thus that, being made confident by demonstrations of the goodness and justice of God, we can disregard the appearances of harshness and injustice which we see in this small portion of his Kingdom that is exposed to our gaze' (§82/H120). Thirdly, Busche holds that a well-founded species-wide evaluation is not possible because of the non-uniform distribution of good and ill among humans. Whilst these three objections are well-made, care must be taken to address them to the correct party, namely, this particular theodicy type and not Kant. As Cassirer (1951,150) highlights, Kant had explicitly rejected such a calculus by Maupertuis as early as 1763 at *NM*,2:181.

**Ilb.** Here the proposed theodicy is trying to show that physical ill is unavoidable. It is the opposite of that in **Ila**, namely that there is net physical ill. It states that 'the preponderance of painful feelings over pleasant ones cannot be separated from the nature of an animal creature such as the human being' (*Failure*,8:260). Busche's restates the three objections above to **Ila**

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<sup>105</sup> Although not relevant to the present assessment of theodicies, this seems inconsistent with Leibniz's earlier statement at §82/H120.

<sup>106</sup> This view was previously advanced by Leibniz (H379) in the Second Objection of the Summary of the Controversy Reduced to Formal Arguments.

but additionally he holds that Kant is making a personal judgement and not a normative one. In my view, Kant does not directly answer the challenge implied in the theodicy when he responds 'then another question arises, namely why the creator of our existence called us into life when the latter, in our correct estimate is not desirable to us'. This amounts to another acknowledgment of not knowing God's ways which was highlighted in the first group of theodicies. Also called into question but left open here is why a good God would make his creation suffer<sup>107</sup>.

**IIc.** In effect this theodicy sets out to answer the question remaining open from **IIb**. It runs 'God has put us here on earth for the sake of a future happiness...yet an arduous and sorrowful state in the present life must without exception precede that hoped-for superabundant blessedness – a state in which we are to become worthy of that future glory precisely through our struggle with adversities' (*Failure*, 8:260). This is clearly a "higher purpose" or "greater good" theodicy and one to which Kant does not have a rebuttal which is not in the form of a further, deeper question. He admits that 'in no way can there be insight into it'. Moreover, this problem of no insight is an important theme to which Kant returns in dealing with all nine theodicies as a group. He ends his consideration, just as he did at *Opt*, 2:29, with a possible allusion to the Gordian Knot, a famous example of not accepting a problem as given but solving it in another manner. Kant acknowledges the attempted theodicy has failed to offer a meaningful explanation but 'one can indeed cut the knot loose [as did Alexander] through an appeal to the highest wisdom which willed it, but one cannot untie the knot, which is what theodicy claims to be capable of accomplishing' (*Failure*, 8:260).

In offering an intermediate balance for the attempted theodicies dealing with physical ill contrasted with God's goodness, although Kant's arguments are less than knock-downs, it could be argued that he has shown considerable forbearance in even considering these three arguments. He has, once more, declined to use two of the weapons in the armoury which he built up, this time in his pre-Critical period. The first is that physical ill is not a punishment for moral evil. The second is that physical ill is not evil at all, but rather natural harm, namely the negative effects of the continuous and regular working of the laws of nature.<sup>108</sup> Thus reason need not be reconciled with God's moral attributes for such a class of supposed evil. This is consistent with my conclusion above that Kant now only sees one evil, moral evil. In turn, this further supports my view that Kant is reviewing commonly advanced theodicies from his time.

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<sup>107</sup> It is likely that here Kant again had Leibniz's *Theodicy* in mind as the latter also uses a tale of Genghis Khan and an Indian woman at §177/H237. It would otherwise be a most remarkable coincidence that both use the same device.

<sup>108</sup> An example is contained in the second of his Earthquake Essays of 1756.

Also noteworthy is that the type of theodicy Kant is critiquing here is no longer that of first group, namely *a priori*; it is now experiential or *a posteriori*.

In the third and final group of theodicies, Kant considers the charges of injustice against the 'world's judge', in modern terms, God's failure to deliver distributive justice. Before examining these, it is worthwhile asking, in the light of the conclusion drawn above that Kant recognises only moral evil, is injustice a separately identifiable evil? In my view, strictly speaking, it is not. Injustice arises with the perceived mismatch between moral behaviour and physical well-being/harm both when the morally evil man prospers or avoids punishment or when the good man suffers as result of others' moral evil. Hence injustice does not introduce another form of evil; it concerns the relationship between the two previous categories of moral evil and physical ill/natural harm. Nevertheless, this does not stop theodicies being offered which claim to address it and these Kant evaluates. However, should any type I theodicy dealing with moral evil have succeeded there would be no need to consider injustice in the world since there would be no moral evil against which to set human weal or woe.

**IIIa.** This theodicy attempts to show that the apparent counter-purposiveness of injustice is not so. Kant sets it out as '[t]he pretension that the depraved go unpunished in the world is ungrounded, for by its very nature every crime already carries with it its due punishment, inasmuch as the inner reproach of conscience torments the depraved even more harshly than the Furies' (*Failure*, 8:261). Kant dismisses this seeing it based on a misunderstanding where the good man with his moral sensitivities projects into the evil man how he (the good man) would feel in the same circumstances. Kant goes further and says that the depraved man only 'laughs at the scrupulousness of the honest who inwardly plague themselves with self-inflicted rebukes'. What really concerns the wicked man is avoiding punishment and Kant considers that the occasional reproach that the wicked man might feel does not spring from conscience and, in any event, is vastly outweighed by the pleasure that evil brings him. Kant's position here is in direct opposition to that in his pre-Critical period and in the early-Critical *Lectures* where the self-punishment by the wicked was accepted and to that extent supported a possible theodicy.

**IIIb.** In this theodicy the lack of the correct relation between guilt and punishment in this world is acknowledged in stating that 'one must often witness with indignation a life led with crying injustice and yet happy to the end' whilst admitting that this is not 'something inherent in nature and deliberately promoted, hence no a moral dissonance' (*Failure*, 8:261). Here, to accord with Kant's categorisation scheme, the theodicy should be concerned with the unavoidability of injustice in this world. However the theodicy presented here does not do this.

Rather we are presented with a theodicy of the “higher purpose” type similar to **IIc** with injustice now playing the instrumental role and providing the moral proving ground in place of physical evil. Kant states:

[I]t is a property of virtue that it should wrestle with adversities...and sufferings only serve to enhance the value of virtue; thus the dissonance of undeserved ills resolves itself before reason into a glorious moral melody (*Failure*,8:261).

Kant’s objection to the theodicy lies in the fact that whilst such moral harmony can occur where ‘at least the end of life crowns virtue and punishes the depraved’ there are many cases where this does not happen. Further, ‘the suffering seems to have happened to the virtuous, not *so that* his virtue should be pure, but *because* it was pure...and this is the very opposite of justice’ (*Failure*,8:262). This reintroduces the notion of the Highest Good which Kant introduced in the first *Critique* and which he defined as compliance with the moral law and happiness in proper proportion to such compliance.<sup>109</sup> This Highest Good is clearly the opposite of injustice. In the second *Critique*, Kant postulated immortality based on the non-achievability of the Highest Good in this life but, surprisingly, in closing his consideration he casts doubt on both immortality and moral faith with the following:

For as regards the possibility that the end of this terrestrial life might not perhaps be the end of all life, such a possibility cannot count as *vindication* of providence; rather, it is merely a decree of morally believing reason which directs the doubter to patience but does not satisfy him (*Failure*,8:262).

A potential resolution of this seeming inconsistency is that here Kant is dealing with philosophical theodicies which concern knowledge based on theoretical or speculative reason whereas in the second *Critique* he is concerned with what can be the subject of faith based on practical reason.

**IIIc.** This theodicy again acknowledges injustice in the ‘disharmonious relation between the moral worth of human beings and the lot which befalls them...’ but our attention is directed towards ‘the use of the human faculties according to the laws of nature, in proportion to the skill and the prudence of their application’ (*Failure*,8:262). In other words, human beings are the source of the injustice to be found in this world and we should not judge such injustice by comparison with ‘supersensible ends’. This is contrasted with a future world where ‘a different order of things will obtain’ and again this is an indirect reference to the Highest Good mentioned in connection with **IIb** but, again surprisingly, Kant finds such an assumption ‘arbitrary’. However, he provides us with the reasoning behind this stance. Whilst the Highest Good can be a product of practical, moral, reason, again theoretical reason is limited by what

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<sup>109</sup> Detailed consideration of the Highest Good is held over to a later chapter of this study.

can be gained from experience. Thus we have no mandate under *theoretical* reason for any argument other than in a future world where the same disharmonious relationship between moral worth and deserts will obtain:

[T]here is no comprehensible relation between the inner grounds of determination of the will (namely the moral way of thinking) according to the laws of freedom, and the (for the most part external) causes of our welfare independent of our will according to the laws of nature, so the presumption remains that the agreement of human fate with a divine justice...is just as little to be expected there as here (*Failure*,8:262).

This passage reprises not only the contrast between intelligible freedom and sensible determination established in the first *Critique* but also, in the final section of the citation, the limitations of theoretical, speculative, reason. Using this, we can only project that the mismatch between virtue and well-being which we experience in this world will also apply in the next. It will be seen that with this response to theodicy **IIIc** Kant has prepared the way for his own theodicy grounded on practical, moral reasoning.

### Summary of Theodicy Evaluation

The results of Kant's considerations can be summarised in the matrix form introduced earlier:

**Table 3**

	<b>I Moral Evil/Holiness</b>	<b>II Physical III/Goodness</b>	<b>III Injustice/Justice</b>
<b>a</b> Denial of Evil	God has own standard of morality but this would make God evil which Kant rejects.	There is more good than evil in the world. Dismissed as 'sophistry'	The evil person suffers through guilt, injustice is denied. Firmly rejected. The evil man does not suffer guilt; only the good man.
<b>b</b> Evil Unavoidable	God could not avoid making a world with evil thus intentional evil is denied. Theodicy rejected as it would deny moral evil.	There is more evil than good in the world. Physical evil is unavoidable but a good God would not have made people suffer. God's ways unknown	Suffering increases moral worth but it seems that the virtuous suffer on account of their virtue. An unsatisfactory outcome.
<b>c</b> Evil Human Fault not that of God	A special case of <b>Ib</b> . Again God not responsible for evil. He has permitted it for higher purposes. Kant sees man not responsible for limitations inherent in creation.	Suffering leads to future happiness. Rejected as just responding to one theodicy with another	There will be a final balance between goodness and reward but no proof of this from sensible world using theoretical reason.

In addition to summarising the results at an individual theodicy level, it is appropriate to also assess Kant's overall argumentation and the success, or otherwise, of the legal analogy which he set up. In my view, given the way he structured his analysis, Kant's arguments, varying from outright dismissal to detailed rebuttal, are patchy, including some counter-assertions which Busche holds are just Kant's personal views. In other cases his arguments do not address the specific contrast, readily derived from the matrix, which he has set up between theodicy type and divine attribute. So my conclusion here is that Kant has not made a good case against the attempted theodicy in all nine cases. This conclusion is broadly in line with that of Busche but he goes further and concludes that Kant's effort to dismiss the nine theodicies has failed - *das Mißlingen ist mißlungen*. He also criticises the application of the legal analogy with Kant often treating theodicy's defender as the accused rather than God and Kant himself being variously both prosecutor and judge. However, it is at the following step where Busche and I part company. I contend that the quality of Kant's argument in response to these theodicies and any shortcomings in these nine cases do not matter since Kant has solid grounds to dismiss philosophical theodicies *as a class*. In this too, I differ from Busche who considers Kant's arguments in favour of such a dismissal are also defective (cf.2012,267).

Kant does not provide any statement whether the nine attempted theodicies exhaust all possibilities or are merely examples of the then prevailing theodicies. I incline towards the latter with his scheme providing a way of systematising those theodicies known to him, some of which are still commonplace even today with people rationalising illness or death with "it was God's way" or accepting setbacks with threadbare platitudes such as "to get their reward the good must suffer in this life". However, I believe that providing a definitive answer to this question is unimportant as again, if Kant is dismissing philosophical theodicies as a class, it does not matter whether or not he has considered all the individual theodicies which exhaust that class. I also hold that whether the individual dismissals of the nine theodicies succeed or fail is irrelevant since Kant is dismissing them because of their common property of invalidly claiming insight into God's ways of working based on our experience of the world. Kant makes his move to this conclusion when stating:

Every previous theodicy has not performed what it promised, namely the vindication of the moral wisdom of the world-government against the doubts raised against it on the basis of what the experience of the world teaches (*Failure*,8:263).

However, he goes on to say that, if God has failed to be acquitted before the tribunal of reason, equally He has failed to be convicted of the alleged offences against His holiness, goodness, and justice, an agnostic result. However that will not do as it is Kant's aim to bring the trial to an end 'once and for all' but he recognises that this will not be possible until it can

be firmly established that 'our reason is absolutely incapable of insight into *the relationship in which any world as we may ever become acquainted with through experience stands with respect to the highest wisdom.*' This would require knowledge of God but in the first *Critique* Kant has shown that this is impossible for us in the world of experience. However, Kant considers that such a result at least demonstrates a 'negative wisdom...namely the insight into the necessary limitation of what we may presume with respect to that which is too high for us' (*Failure*,8:263). However and surprisingly, Kant does not fully exploit this argument but develops another one. This could be taken to mean that he regards the argument from the first *Critique* as insufficient but I discount this as such an interpretation would seriously undermine the great metaphysical and epistemological edifice which Kant constructed in that work. The alternative, which I favour, is that Kant wants to provide some case specific justification to supplement the general argument from the first *Critique*. From our experience of the world we have a concept of the artistic wisdom of God which underpins the physico-theology to which Kant remained attracted throughout his career. To this Kant adds that:

we also have in the moral idea of our own practical reason a concept of moral wisdom which could have been implanted in the world in general by a most perfect creator. – But of the unity of agreement in a sensible world between that artistic and moral wisdom we have no concept; nor can we ever hope to attain one (*Failure*,8:263).

This short passage contains two key elements. Firstly, again, Kant is confirming the role of practical reason in giving some indication of God's moral purposes. Secondly, we are incapable of the synthetic combination of God's artistic wisdom, derived from the apparent purposiveness of the world which we experience, and His moral wisdom<sup>110</sup>. Schulte provides a succinct summary of this impossibility:

Theodicy fails generally because it is impossible for the defender of theodicy to bridge the gulf between the intelligible world of divine teleology [wisdom] and the bad state of affairs in the empirical world by means of finite reason(1991,391). (my translation)

When the Highest Good is discussed in detail we will see that this inability to bridge this gulf is a recurring challenge but one which should not surprise us as the separation between the sensible and the intelligible, phenomenal and noumenal, is fundamental to Kant's metaphysics. Also recalling his differentiation between *Böse* and *Übel*, this is not a German word-game; *Böse* inhabits the intelligible world, the world of freedom; *Übel* inhabits the sensible world, the world of nature. The inability to bridge these worlds lies at not only at the heart of the failure of philosophical theodicies but of injustice, the opposite of the Highest Good.

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<sup>110</sup> God's moral wisdom will be considered again in Ch.9.

This is the reason why any attempt to address any shortcomings in the arguments of the nine theodicies is nugatory. Moreover, this is also why the questions whether the nine are an exhaustive list and whether his dismissals of the individual theodicies are watertight do not require answers. Any theodicy reliant on theoretical reason yielding knowledge of God would also fail. This may seem a negative result, but it is important that in this way, Kant clears the field of *all* philosophical theodicies before advancing a theodicy of his own.

In supporting Kant's argument that all philosophical theodicies can be dismissed as a class because of our inability to combine God's artistic wisdom with His moral wisdom, I am also taking a position contra Duncan. In contrast, Duncan (cf. 2012, 981-2) holds that he gave up on theodicies *prior* to *Failure* because, realising from the work of C.C.E. Schmid that creaturely limitation led to evil necessarily which absolves man from liability for moral evil. Kant wanted an account based on the moral responsibility which stems from man's freedom to act.

Despite my acceptance of Kant's dismissal of philosophical theodicies on principle, there are still well-founded overall concerns about the exercise which he undertook. The first potential problem concerns the 'tribunal of reason' which Kant set up. He is clear on the role that the tribunal of reason plays in the evaluation of theodicies. He states that '[t]he author of a theodicy agrees...that this juridical process be instituted before the tribunal of reason' and further that 'he is not allowed to dismiss the latter in the course of the process of law through a decree of incompetency of the tribunal of human reason' (*Failure*, 8:255). However, Kant's conclusion concerning 'the outcome of this juridical process before the forum of philosophy' (*Failure*, 8:263) is that the attempted vindications of God's moral wisdom have not only failed but failed structurally because of their impossibility of ever doing so. Kant is not being inconsistent in this matter. He has insisted that reason is used to examine potential theodicies but, by proceeding in this way, Kant has again demonstrated the limitations of the speculative, theoretical, reason being employed. Thus it is possible to see his examination of the nine attempted theodicies as an extended heuristic device which clears the path for his argument for a non-philosophical theodicy using practical reason, recalling the special sense in which Kant is using "philosophical" in this context, namely to denote theodicies based on theoretical, speculative reason.

The second potential problem concerns knowledge of God's properties. In the first *Critique*, Kant demonstrates that whilst we can have an idea of God (being an Ideal of Pure Reason), we cannot have any knowledge of Him. In the second *Critique*, God is a postulate of practical reason. In *Failure* (8:257) God's properties are identified as (i) holiness as author of the world (law-giver), (ii) goodness as ruler and (iii) justice as judge. Kant offers us no derivation of these



properties beyond stating that these are '[t]he attributes of the world-author's supreme wisdom'. This repeats an earlier claim for the same three attributes made in *Lectures* and more evidence was provided when Kant was recorded as stating:

Any being who is to give objective reality to moral duties must possess without limit moral perfections of holiness, benevolence, and justice. These attributes constitute the whole moral concept of God (*Lect*,28:1073).

In other words, Kant is claiming that if we think about a being without any of the three attributes, we are not thinking about the moral God but something else. Yet there is an apparent discrepancy here in that we are denied knowledge of God but we can rationally postulate that he has the three listed moral properties. In my view, the resolution is possible as Kant shows that God's moral properties do not come from the speculative use of pure reason but rather from the demands of practical reason with the latter overriding the former as stated in the second *Critique* (*CPR*,5:119-121). This is a view endorsed by Byrne when, despite his predominantly anti-realist stance on God, he suggests that the attributes under discussion here are characterised by their utility:

the predicates we use to fill out the picture we have of God do not function to pick out attributes which God might actually have. Instead, they fill out the picture we must have of God if our practical purposes are to be served (2007,67-68) .

In sum, Kant's conclusion that philosophical theodicies fail is sound despite any objections which can be brought against his arguments in rejecting the individual theodicies which he considered. Our way is now clear to revisit his taxonomy of evil as a prerequisite to our examination of Kant's own 'authentic' theodicy. This step is needed since, just as was done in considering Kant's pre-Critical period, if the examination of authentic theodicy is to yield a definite result, we must be certain which evils Kant saw himself as addressing and which not.

## **Chapter 8 - THE TAXONOMY OF EVIL REVISITED**

### ***Introductory Remarks***

Yakira writes that 'Kant does not cease returning to the philosophical question of the religion. However, this interest for the religion is always related to the question of evil' (2009,153). We must now follow Kant's example.

In the previous chapter, I maintained that with *Failure*, in his consideration of theodicy **1c** (cf. *Failure*,8:259), Kant recognised that creatures' necessary limitations were not evil for which they were morally responsible, but merely the condition of possibility of such evil. However, in Part B of this study dealing with Kant's early-Critical period, a significant unresolved tension

arose from the presence in *Lectures* of the following '[e]vil has *no special* germ; for it is *mere negation* and consists only in the *limitation of the good*. It is nothing beyond this' (*Lect*,28:1078). This is seemingly in direct opposition to Kant's stance on metaphysical evil conceived as limitation in *Failure*. Not only is moral evil apparently excluded here but Kant appears to be saying that the limitation itself is evil and not that the limitation is the ground of possibility for evil.

This passage from *Lectures* seems also to conflict with the argument which I developed in the pre-Critical part of this study (Part A) that, in *Negative Magnitudes* of 1763, in addition to recognising evil as a limitation, Kant saw evil as ontologically positive but with a negative value when compared to the good. One possible response could be to claim that Kant simply changed his mind by the time he gave the *Lectures* in 1783/4 and then changed it back again in 1791. But that would be weak with a lack of supporting evidence for such a flip-flop. Another possible response could be to abandon my *Negative Magnitudes* argument that a fundamental change had taken place in Kant's thinking. Should this line be taken, it would at least allow a claim to be made for continuity, namely that in *Lectures* Kant was just maintaining the essentially Leibnizian position he initially adopted in his pre-Critical period. However, I will not be taking that course as I consider my argument from *Negative Magnitudes* to be sound and fully supported by those advanced by Schönfeld<sup>111</sup> and Heimsoeth<sup>112</sup> on the topic. Moreover in *Religion*, Kant provides further weight to my argument by restating the key claim of *Negative Magnitudes* in theory at 6:22n and then applying it to evil in the following manner:

Now, if the law fails nevertheless to determine somebody's free power of choice with respect to an action relating to it, an incentive *opposed to it* must have influence on the power of choice of the human being in question (*Rel*,6:24) (my emphasis).

Further, abandoning my *Negative Magnitudes* argument would do nothing to address the later contrast between *Lectures* and *Failure*.

These apparent inconsistencies demand a re-examination of Kant's taxonomy of evil to determine whether a unified account can be produced. If not, this issue has the potential to undermine Kant's case for his own, authentic, theodicy. We must ask whether the two positions, evil as ontologically positive and evil as a limitation, are indeed in any kind of competition. If they are not, neither need be abandoned. This re-examination requires a step back in time to look briefly again at Leibniz's taxonomy of evil. Then a temporary jump forward is needed, past our current concern with *Failure* to *Religion* as this work contains Kant's definitive stance on the source and nature of evil. I will argue that metaphysical evil conceived

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. Schönfeld (2000,188)

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Heimsoeth (1966,227)

as limitation and Kant's concept of radical evil introduced in *Religion* perform the same function and further, neither is in conflict with the idea of ontologically real moral evil, a permanent element in Kant's taxonomy from 1763 onwards.

### ***Metaphysical Evil from Limitation - Leibniz and Failure Compared***

For Leibniz there were three classes of evil. These he sets out as: 'Evil may be taken metaphysically, physically and morally. *Metaphysical evil* consists in mere imperfection, *physical evil* in suffering and *moral evil* in sin' (§21/H136). However, he adds the important caveat that 'Now that I have disposed of moral evil; physical evil, that is, sorrows, sufferings, miseries, will be less troublesome to explain, since these are the results of moral evil' (§241/H276). This taxonomy appears to leave out natural evil (which elsewhere I have termed natural harm) but Antognazza argues that this can be fairly included in Leibniz's understanding of metaphysical evil (cf. 2014,122). This would seem justified as the imperfections which Leibniz describes can rightly be termed the limitations of createdness. When our world was formed, one amongst the series of possible worlds contemplated by God was actualised. The relationships between its various physical components, which up to that point were just potential, became actual. To the extent that other possibilities were thereby excluded, limitations became inherent in creation through its finitude. The resultant physical relationships we describe as the laws of nature which both Leibniz and Kant saw as unchanging, continuous in operation and universal. In his pre-Critical works prior to *Negative Magnitudes*, Kant gave no sign of deviating from this Leibnizian taxonomy of evil.

In *Failure* Kant considered three types of evil: moral, physical, and injustice. Moral evil Kant calls 'evil proper (sin)' (*Failure*,8:256). That is straightforward but not so the next type of evil. In *Failure* it is described merely as 'ill (pain)' which is unhelpful since the term "physical evil" does not necessarily cover the same thing for Leibniz and Kant. For the former, it was the suffering consequent upon moral evil but it is difficult to be certain what it covers for Kant in *Failure*. Ill and pain are such generic terms that they could easily cover Leibnizian suffering or Kantian natural harm or even both. From the examples which Kant gives in theodicies II a-c, there is no indication whether he was concerned with Leibnizian suffering or just with those bad things *im Allgemein* which happen in our world. As Kant remains silent on suffering in the Leibnizian sense, the stance that moral evil also encompasses the suffering consequent upon the evil act is maintained for the purposes of this study. A taxonomy of just a single evil is supported by Emile Fackenheim who writes 'by evil we do not mean pain, disease, death etc. No doubt these abound but we are not concerned with them. Our concern is solely with moral evil' (1996,27) and calling on Kant in support citing 'nothing is morally evil [i.e. capable of being

imputed] but that which is our own *act*' (*Rel*,6:31). Fackenheim reinforces his reading by adding the following explicit exclusion of other candidate types:

With this definition of evil Kant eliminates from outset, as inadequate, a host of metaphysical theories. Evil cannot be located in a pre-existing cosmic principle, such as matter, the irrational, or non-being. These exist prior to my act of will, and independently of it...If they are the source of an evil, this is not moral evil[.] For the same reason, evil cannot lie in a pre-existing and unalterable condition within human nature. It cannot be, say, the limitation placed on human nature by the senses, a limitation distinguishing man from God. Man has not freely chosen this limitation, and is thus not responsible for it (1996,27).

Indeed, support for this interpretation can be found within Kant's writings when he is discussing the propensity to evil in *Religion* where he states that 'we are only talking of a propensity to genuine evil, i.e. moral evil' (*Rel*,6:29). In other words, the only evil which is real for the late-Critical Kant is moral evil. As previously stated, it is only in order to evaluate then-current theodicies, that Kant considers a possible relation of physical ill to moral evil, a relation which is suggested in its definition as '[t]he conditionally counter-purposive, or what can indeed never co-exist with the wisdom of a will, yet can do so as a means' (*Failure*,8:256). In contrast, I hold that Kant's substantive position remained that which he developed in his pre-Critical period, namely that physical ill is not punishment for moral evil but is rather natural harm<sup>113</sup> where this is the injury done to humans as a result of the unchanging, continuous, and ubiquitous laws of nature.

The third type of evil which Kant considers is injustice namely the 'disproportion between crimes and penalties in the world' (*Failure*,8:257). However, this I have argued earlier does not introduce a new type of evil but rather deals with the particular relationship between virtue/moral evil and un/happiness. Significantly, there is no mention of metaphysical evil in *Failure*. Kant's taxonomy is complete without it. Indeed Busche goes so far as to compliment Kant for having excluded metaphysical evil from his taxonomy stating '[n]evertheless Kant does well to not once introduce a metaphysically counter-purposive<sup>114</sup> as a fourth ground of complaint [against God]' (2013,245).<sup>115</sup> We shall briefly return to the question of this exclusion. Notwithstanding, in *Religion*, the publication of which immediately followed *Failure*, Kant introduced radical evil which was not included in the taxonomy of *Failure*. This I will argue is the potential to do evil and not evil *per se*. In that case, it is not an additional evil which Kant neglected in *Failure*.

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<sup>113</sup> Once more this is a part of Leibnizian metaphysical evil under Antognazza's classification (cf.2014,122ff.)

<sup>114</sup> In *Failure*, "counter-purposive" is Kant's overarching description of all types of evil.

<sup>115</sup> My translation

### ***Evil as Limitation for Leibniz***

Should God, as infinite and the most real, create something which is also infinite and most real, then it would be another God which is impossible. Therefore when God creates, He must create something which is both less real and finite; indeed the concept of a creature *per se* includes being limited. It does not matter here whether the starting point is one encompassing neo-Platonic emanation from the complete good of the One to complete evil or Augustinian *creatio ex nihilo*, the result is the same, namely that creatures are finite and thus do not and cannot contain the complete good which is only found in God. This shortfall in goodness Leibniz regards as metaphysical evil. As we have seen, the other two forms of evil for Leibniz are moral evil and physical evil where the latter is punishment for the former, although he recognises 'that physical evil is not always distributed here on earth according to the proportion of moral evil, as it seems that justice demands' (§43/H98).

However, for Leibniz, metaphysical evil is also the ultimate condition of possibility of all evil, moral evil thus included. This can be seen from his statements that 'considering the metaphysical good and evil which is in all substances, whether endowed with or devoid of intelligence, and which taken so broadly would include physical good and moral good' (§263/H288) and 'the metaphysical good which includes everything makes it necessary sometimes to admit physical evil and moral evil' (§209/H258). Leibniz is clear in the Preface to the *Theodicy* at H57 that '...the freedom of the will, so essential to the morality of action: for justice and injustice, praise and blame...cannot attach to necessary<sup>116</sup> actions' and in *Theodicy* proper that '[f]reedom is deemed necessary<sup>117</sup>, in order that man may be deemed guilty and open to punishment' (§1/H123)<sup>118</sup>. Now at §20/H135 Leibniz states that 'we must consider that there is an original imperfection in the creature because the creature is limited in its essence.' From these elements the following argument can be distilled:

1. What is necessary is unfree (H57)
2. A creature qua creature is essentially (necessarily) limited (§20/H135)
3. To the extent that a creature is limited it is unfree (from 1,2)
4. Freedom is required for moral accountability (§1/H123)
5. Evil arising from limitation is not morally accountable (from 3,4)

The original imperfection (metaphysical evil arising from limitation), as it is part of man's essence (cf. §20/H135), must be antecedent to any evil for which man is accountable. The

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<sup>116</sup> To my reading "necessary" is being used here in the sense of "could not be otherwise"

<sup>117</sup> To my reading "necessary" is being used here in the sense of "required"

<sup>118</sup> Kant's stance on the necessity of freedom for moral accountability is no different.

latter is moral evil which requires the condition of freedom to be accountable. This means that metaphysical evil conceived as limitation on its own is insufficient for moral evil. This agrees, in my judgement, with the view advanced by Antognazza in the following:

It seems to me that metaphysical evil, intended as this original limitation, has strictly the character of *malum in se*. That is, ontologically, it is strictly non-being. In other words, although creaturely limitation is formally evil (*malum in se*) insofar as it qualifies as an instance of non-being, it does not on its own make a creature to some degree or in some respect evil (2014,133).

From the above considerations I contend that it is justified to regard metaphysical evil from limitation not as “real”, that is ontologically positive, but rather it is the condition of possibility to commit moral evil, a stance also adopted by Brachtendorf (2002,72). It is not the active *malum culpae* with the perpetrator, in Leibniz’s taxonomy, deserving of physical evil as *malum poenae*. In other words, it is the condition of the possibility of our doing wrong but it is still inexpugnably part of being human, a creature capable of (im)moral actions.

### ***Kant's Radical Evil***

It is useful to clear up first one possible misconception concerning radical evil, namely that it is Kant’s term for horrendous evil. This is an understandable natural reading where “radical” is taken to mean “extreme”. No, it is rather the mechanism by which Kant explains the presence of evil in mankind. By examining the etymology of the word “radical” James DiCenso (2012,38) offers us a helpful description, ‘it [radical evil] rather indicates the root (*radix*) of evil within our inherent freedom to choose’.<sup>119</sup> This also suggests that radical evil is the ground for evil not the evil which is done and, in my view, there is ample evidence in *Religion* to support such an interpretation, an example being Kant's description: '[t]his evil is radical, since it corrupts the ground of all maxims' (*Rel*,6:37). In other words it undermines the subjective grounds of our actions, but it does not constitute the actions themselves. Even more explicitly, Kant states that it is 'the *formal* ground of every deed contrary to law' (*Rel*,6:32, my emphasis) and thus not the deed itself.

Kant is concerned to show in *Religion*, just as in the *Groundwork*, that moral responsibility rests on the individual through the exercise of freedom in selecting maxims which either comply with or contravene the moral law. He is keen to ensure that when we say that someone is good or bad by nature, it does not mean that that person is necessitated to act in a good or bad way but rather ‘that he holds within himself a first ground (to us inscrutable) for the adoption of good or evil (unlawful) maxims’ (*Rel*,6:21). Further, this ground is a matter of choice which Kant describes as follows:

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<sup>119</sup> See also Allison (1990,147) in support of these definitional points

The disposition, i.e. the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims, can only be a single one, and it applies to the entire use of freedom universally. This disposition too, however, must be adopted through the free power of choice, for otherwise it could not be imputed (*Rel*,6:25).

However, Kant holds that we cannot go looking for the maxim for this first subjective ground as it would have its ground in turn and so on, leading to an infinite regress. He states that 'we cannot derive this disposition, or rather its highest ground, from a first act of the power of choice in time, we call it a characteristic of the power of choice that pertains to it *by nature*' (*Rel*,6:25, my emphasis). In my view, it is for this reason that Kant terms this choice noumenal to free it from such infinite regress. However, in so doing, this aspect of his moral philosophy could be endangered in the eyes of those who question his metaphysics. This noumenal moral agency, the capacity to fundamentally choose evil, is something we have qua human and it is for this reason Kant wants to term it innate. Kant confirms this when he terms evil 'innate only in this sense, that it is posited as the ground antecedent to every use of freedom in experience'<sup>120</sup> (in earliest youth as far back as our birth) and is thus conceived of as present in man at birth - which is not to say that birth is the cause of it' (*Rel*,6:22). This establishes Kant's view that this propensity as the ground necessary for evil but not the evil itself. At several places in *Religion* Kant stresses that this attribute is from our limitations as a species, not as individual agents. For example, 'if it is legitimate to assume that this propensity belongs to the human being universally (and hence to the character of the species), this propensity will be called a *natural* propensity of the human being to evil' (*Rel*,6:29). It arises from our createdness, our finitude. Moreover, in the *Groundwork* at *GW*,4:405, Kant had previously talked about such a propensity which seemed to be endemic to the human condition. Importantly, it is not the good or evil which is innate but rather the power of choice for good or evil. Although he does not explicitly position two additional key concepts which are contained in *Religion* under the power of choice, Kant underpins the effect of choice by asserting that we have both a predisposition to the good and a propensity to evil<sup>121</sup>. He states that 'I represent the relationship of the good and the evil principles as two equally self-subsisting transient causes affecting men' (*Rel*,6:11). It cannot be an either/or situation since if an individual had only one he/she would be permanently good or evil and thus incapable of change which is far removed from Kant's position. It is this propensity to evil which Kant calls radical evil as it is this which lies at the root of all our evil actions (cf. *Rel*,6:32). It should be again emphasised, however, that the propensity to evil is not the evil which is done. This becomes even clearer when Kant describes this propensity as '*peccatum in potentia*' (*Rel*,6:40).

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<sup>120</sup> It is extra-experience which makes it noumenal.

<sup>121</sup> For the purposes of this study a full exposition of these two characteristics is not needed but a full account is to be found at *Rel*,6:26-32

It is also useful here to recall Kant's view on the uniqueness of human beings which is that we have two natures, a sensible, animal nature (affected by and affecting the phenomenal world) and an intelligible rational nature (capable of formulating and willing according to reason and moral principles<sup>122</sup>). Beings that are solely animal in nature do no wrong because they do not have the means to differentiate between good and bad acts. Indeed, we regard human beings who through accidents of birth do not reach a certain threshold level of rationality as not morally responsible for their actions. At the other end of the spectrum beings with only a fully rational nature, such as angels would have, should they exist, could only do right actions and hence they would not display virtue since they cannot *choose* to follow the moral law. This is a position which Kant clearly confirms in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, stating that 'for finite holy beings there would be no doctrine of virtue but only a doctrine of morals' (MM,6:383). In the *Groundwork* Kant shows *a priori* that, arising from our rationality, we become aware of the moral law within us. However, from our sensible nature we have inclinations which when turned into maxims, the subjective grounds for our actions, either comply with or contravene that moral law. When we choose to act on maxims of the former type we do good; when we choose the latter type we do evil. Again, it is a matter of choice under the conditions of freedom. It is because we can do otherwise that we have, uniquely, the duty or obligation to obey the moral law. From this it can be seen that if we had only a predisposition to the good, we would be incapable of immoral actions. Equally, should only a propensity to evil be present we would only do evil and the escape from evil which Kant in *Religion* bases on a revolutionary change of heart, or becoming a new man, (cf.*Rel*,6:47), would be impossible. Kant ascribes our ability to effect this change of heart to the presupposition 'that there is still a germ of goodness left in its entire purity, a germ which cannot be extirpated or corrupted' (*Rel*,6:45). Thus both the propensity to evil and predisposition to the good are permanently present in man and compete with each other for ascendancy.

### ***Resolving the Competing Accounts of Evil***

Kant states that 'Evil can have originated only from moral evil (not just from the limitations of our nature)' (*Rel*,6:43). There are two ways of reading this. Firstly, that evil can only have come from moral evil and no other source or, secondly, that evil came from moral evil *in combination* with the limitations qua human<sup>123</sup>. Moreover, for Kant to suggest that limitations are the ground of evil in the same work, *Religion*, in which he advances the notion of radical evil, must mean that he cannot have seen them as conflicting if he is to be regarded as having

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<sup>122</sup> The two descriptions in parentheses are taken from DiCenso (2012)

<sup>123</sup> Duncan (2012,987) goes one step further to claim that 'Kant explicitly says that evil cannot spring from our limitations' but I do not support such an interpretation.



produced a consistent account. When one takes the second reading above, which in my view is the correct one, a resolution of the difficulty with which we started emerges. This would mean that (i) the ontologically positive evil of 1763 in *Negative Magnitudes* and (ii) the metaphysical evil arising from limitation endorsed by Kant in his pre-Critical period and apparently restated by him in 1783/4 are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, we will see that these notions are mutually supportive.

In the discussion above we have seen that the metaphysical evil from limitation is not ontologically positive but rather a potential to do evil due to human finitude and which cannot be altered. We have seen too that radical evil is a potential to do evil which is again a human characteristic which, in Kant's terms, cannot be extirpated only overcome through our ongoing resolve to obey the moral law (cf. *Rel*,6:37). So the first reconciliation offered is that metaphysical evil conceived as limitation and radical evil perform the same function, namely providing the ultimate ground for the possibility of evil in the world. They have been developed from quite different starting points but share a common end point. This reconciliation is consistent with Kant's later statement in *Lectures* that 'if we ask where the evil in individual human beings comes from, the answer is that it exists on account of the limits necessary to every creature' (*Lect*,28:1079). To my mind, the natural reading of this is that Kant is advancing the ground of evil not describing an evil *per se*. The proposed reconciliation would also fully answer the question which Duncan (2012,988) poses: 'it is not clear whether the *Religion's* theory of evil develops and makes explicit what is implicit and undeveloped in Kant's previous works or if it indicates a shift in Kant's views'. I consider the former to be correct.

But what sort of evil? It is the moral evil named by both by Leibniz in *Theodicy* and by Kant in *Failure*. Further, given Kant's stance on physical evil as natural harm, it can only be moral evil which Kant was referring to when he argued in *Negative Magnitudes* for a positive ontology of evil. Moreover, arguing that evil is ontologically positive is not incompatible with its ground (as the condition of its possibility) being sought elsewhere. This means that the pre-Critical Kant was not setting two types of evil in opposition but rather elucidating two different things, namely the *nature* of evil as experienced in the world (as ontologically positive) with its *ground* (limitation). Continuing to see a conflict between them is to be mistaken. This is what I take Duncan to be doing in his 2012 paper where he contends that Kant made a late career switch from evil as limitation to ontologically positive evil in order not to assign responsibility for evil to God. To my mind, it is an unnecessary move on Duncan's part. Furthermore, the resolution advanced here does not impact Kant's taxonomy of evil in the immediately preceding work, *Failure*, since in that work Kant is concerned with evil as commonly reported, not with its

ground. In this way, Busche's compliment to Kant for omitting metaphysical evil from *Failure* is well made. So, in sum, the tensions between the various accounts of evil can be disarmed with the two reconciliations which have been put forward. These are: first, that Kant's radical evil, his propensity to evil, performs the same function as Leibniz's metaphysical evil conceived as limitation; second, that Leibniz's moral evil in *Theodicy* is Kant's ontologically positive evil in *Negative Magnitudes* and the moral evil in *Failure*.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that Kant himself neither argued for any such account nor sought any reconciliation of the apparent difficulty in *Lectures* which prompted our re-examination of evil. What is being advanced here is not to be found explicitly in any of Kant's writings; it is a hidden harmony. If the proposed account is accepted, the challenge with which we started is solved and we are no longer seeking to explain conflicts between the *Negative Magnitudes* of 1763, the *Lectures* of twenty years later and *Failure* in 1791; these works are simply dealing with different aspects of evil. This has not been an irrelevant academic exercise without any bearing on the purposes of this study. It removes the final possible threat to Kant's position that evil results from our freedom and therefore we bear responsibility for moral evil. Our unified account of evil can now underpin our further consideration of Kant on theodicy *per se* to which we can now return with renewed confidence.

## **Chapter 9 - KANTS OWN AUTHENTIC THEODICY**

### ***Constraints on Possible Theodicy***

Although Kant did not put forward an explicit theodicy of his own in his early-Critical period, the constraints on any theodicy should he have done so were listed earlier (see p.78). It is useful, before examining his own theodicy, to update this list to reflect the changes in Kant's theodical thought by 1791. Kant must now work within these constraints if he is to remain consistent. It is important, however, to keep in mind that these constraints have not been imposed on him from any outside source, whether philosophical or theological; they are solely the result of his own considerations to date. They are:

1. Philosophical theodicies based on the arguments of theoretical/speculative reason drawn from our experience of the world do not and cannot succeed.
2. Theodicies based on a claimed knowledge of God are ruled out by the epistemology of the first *Critique*. This debars all attempted philosophical theodicies, past, present, and future.

3. Also invalidated are theodicies which rely on any of the three traditional proofs of God's existence which Kant dismissed.
4. Kant regards that which had been traditionally termed physical evil not as evil at all; it is the workings of the ubiquitous and unchanging laws of nature with disadvantageous outcomes for human beings. Theodicy does not have to account for such natural harm as it has been termed in this study.
5. Attempted free-will theodicies grounded on God's wanting something from us other than compliance with the moral law are rejected.
6. The challenge of injustice in the world remains but it concerns the relationship between moral evil/virtue and natural harm/well-being. It is not a separate category of evil.
7. The metaphysical evil arising from the unavoidable limitation in finite created beings no longer has to be accounted for since it is the ground of the possibility of evil, not the evil itself. Only moral evil remains to be accounted for. It is real; namely it is ontologically positive<sup>124</sup>.

These constraints limit Kant's freedom of manoeuvre and it should not be a surprise when Kant gives us an indication in a concise yet powerful footnote early in *Failure* that it is the moral route to a theodicy which he will follow:

Now since the concept of God suited to religion must be a concept of him as moral being (for we have no need of him for natural explanation, hence for speculative purposes); and since this concept can just as little be derived from the mere transcendental concept of an absolutely necessary being – a concept that totally escapes us – as be founded on experience; so it is clear enough that the proof of the existence of such a being can be none other than a moral proof. (*Failure*, 8:256n).<sup>125</sup>

In one of the most frequently quoted passages from Kant's works he says in the Preface to the second edition of the first *Critique* '[t]hus I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**' (Bxxx). This suggests that where Kant now finds himself was his planned destination and not that he had painted himself into a theodical corner.

### ***Authentic Theodicy***

In advancing his authentic theodicy, Kant does not make the task easy for those who wish to understand and/or reconstruct his argument, giving us a merely a half page in *Failure* which is

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<sup>124</sup> Although Duncan (2012) and I have differed on the route by which Kant reached this point and the timing of Kant's conclusion, we agree on his stance on evil in 1791.

<sup>125</sup> In addition to giving us the clearest indication that Kant will base any eventual theodicy on morality it also reprises Kant's dismissal of the traditional proofs of God's existence based as they all are in Kant's view on the ontological argument.

difficult even by Kant's own standards and is seemingly inconsistent in places. He follows this with an example of authentic theodicy which helps in understanding his stance, before enlarging on the key subject of sincerity in the Concluding Remark. However, after tracing his thinking through these various stages, it will be seen, despite the initial difficulties, that there can be no doubt that Kant's own theodicy is one based on moral faith resting on the moral proof attested to in the citation above from *Failure*,8:256n.

Kant opens his argument by stating that '[a]ll theodicy should truly be an interpretation of nature insofar as God announces his will through it' (*Failure*,8:264). This is surprising since was this not what Kant was addressing in the nine attempted theodicies? Showing why they necessarily fail, namely to derive God's purpose from our experience in the world? An 'interpretation of nature' seems to be just that. As often with Kant when he appears to contradict himself, as he seems to do at this point, it is a reasonable (and charitable) hypothesis to assume, if only temporarily, that he meant something other than the natural reading. I believe this to be the case here. Kant continues by stating that any theodicy is either *doctrinal* or *authentic*. His description of the former as 'a rational inference of that will from the utterances of which the law-giver has made use' (*Failure*,8:264) sheds very little light on the differentiation which Kant is introducing. Further, the natural reading of "doctrinal" suggests something based on a text claimed as revealed or on church teachings, but this is not Kant's intent. Supporting this reading is that this is not Kant's first use of "doctrinal" in the sense used here. Rather, it is consistent with the use of the term in the first *Critique* where he states:

there is in merely theoretical judgements an **analogue** of practical judgements, where taking them to be true is aptly described by the word **belief**, and which we can call **doctrinal beliefs** (A825/B853).

In other words, theoretical judgements result in doctrinal beliefs. Unhelpfully, Kant does not give a clear-cut example of a law-giver's utterance of the type meant but provides an indirect clue to his thinking with the following which also confirms the sense in which he is using "doctrinal":

[T]he world can also be considered by us as a divine publication of his [God's] will's *purposes*. However, in this respect the world is *often* a closed book for us, and it is so *every time* we look at it to extract from it God's *final aim* (which is always moral) even though it is an object of experience. Philosophical trials in this kind of interpretation are doctrinal (*Failure*,8:264).

This gets us onto more solid ground as it was exactly the attempt to extract God's moral aim from our experience of the world which failed in the nine philosophical theodicies which Kant considered and rejected. Further, since in Kant's view, they failed necessarily rather than

contingently, the conclusion can be drawn that he rejects all theodicies which he terms doctrinal.

However, just as progress is being made, Kant introduces another apparent inconsistency:

Yet we cannot deny the name of "theodicy" also to the mere dismissal of all objections against divine wisdom, if this dismissal is a divine decree, or...if it is a pronouncement of the same reason through which we form our concept of God – necessarily and prior to all experience – as a moral and wise being (*Failure*,8:264).

The apparent difficulty arises when we recall that one of the conditions for the trial set up at the start of *Failure* was that simply dismissing objections against divine wisdom was not allowed. There is, however, a crucial distinction to be made here. At the start of *Failure*, Kant was considering those cases that 'ratiocinating (speculative) reason' could bring against God; here he is saying that dismissal is allowed provided that it can be shown that it is based on 'efficacious practical reason'. So the 'dismissal of all objections against divine wisdom' in the form of theodicy is allowed when based on moral grounds established by *a priori* practical reason. With this, Kant is making another significant move. He is expanding what is covered by the term "theodicy". Whereas previously theodicy was the province of theoretical/speculative reason it now embraces practical/moral reason too. Of course, Kant still has the challenge of providing such reasoning, but the distinction allows him to define authentic theodicy:

For through our [practical] reason God then becomes the interpreter of his will as announced through creation; and we can call this interpretation an *authentic* theodicy (*Failure*,8:264).

So an authentic theodicy must fulfil three criteria (i) it is an utterance 'made by the law-giver himself', (ii) it is given in creation, but (iii), above all it must be established by practical, moral, reason. Because the moral law is grounded in reason it cannot be invalidated without denying our own rationality and since elsewhere he terms God the personification of the moral law, Kant is able to state that an authentic theodicy is 'the unmediated definition and voice of God through which he gives meaning to the letter of his creation' (*Failure*,8:264). "Voice", of course, is not to be taken literally. Elsewhere, Kant states that '[e]ven if God really spoke to man, the latter could never know that it was God who had been speaking' (*SF*,7:63). This is because, per the first *Critique*, we have no knowledge of God. For Kant, God's voice is the moral law. We can also note a happy side-effect of Kant's terming his theodicy "authentic", the everyday meaning of which is "genuine". This is just what a theodicy based on practical/moral reason is for Kant.

It is certain that Kant regarded himself as advancing a theodicy here. Thus Duncan's choice of title for his 2012 paper 'Moral Evil, Freedom and the Goodness of God: Why Kant abandoned Theodicy' is problematic, especially since Duncan does not consider Kant's authentic theodicy

at all. But Duncan would have been correct if Kant had not expanded the meaning of "theodicy" in the way described above. However, what is paramount here is what *Kant* thought he was doing. I hold that Kant is not so much abandoning theodicy but giving it a new basis, a view supported by Brachtendorf (2002,58)<sup>126</sup>. It is now a *Glaubenssache*<sup>127</sup>. But we need also to identify the kind of faith involved. It is a faith grounded in morality which in turn is derived from our rationality. Thus it is an *a priori* rational faith not a fideistic one based on a supposedly revealed text. Brachtendorf summarises Kant's argumentation well stating that he, Kant, has found a '[m]iddle way between a convinced rationalism and [at the other extreme] fideism which following the failure of rationalism wants to base theodicy on faith based on revelation rather than reason' (2002,58, my translation). Indeed, Kant had employed reason, now practical as opposed to theoretical, combined with a morally grounded faith in God in contrast to ungrounded as in fideism.

At this point, what would be ideal is for a concrete example to be given. However, what Kant gives us instead is his interpretation of the story of Job which he considers: 'such an authentic interpretation expressed allegorically'. To provide a full exposition of Job's story is unnecessary especially as Kant provides the succinct summary which is all that is needed:

Job is portrayed as a man whose enjoyment of life included everything which anyone might possibly imagine it as making it complete. He was healthy, well-to-do, free, master over others whom he can make happy, surrounded by a happy family, among beloved friends - and on top of all of this (what is most important) at peace with himself in a good conscience. A harsh fate imposed in order to test him suddenly snatched from him all these blessings, except the last. (*Failure*,8:265)

Nevertheless, there are rival interpretations of Job's woes. Firstly, for Job's friends, Job's ills must stem from God's justice. Whilst they cannot identify any offences which Job has committed, they still hold that there is no such thing as innocent suffering. They are arguing *a priori* that any other interpretation would be 'impossible according to divine justice'. In other words, as summarised by Kenneth Seeskin (1987,230), their case is 'because God is undeniable, innocent suffering cannot occur'. It can also be noted that in taking such a view, Job's friends are saying that there is a proportional relationship between happiness and virtue in *this* life, a situation describing an immanent Highest Good. In contrast, there is Job's own view where he says that he has done nothing wrong but accepts 'the system of unconditional divine decision' (*Failure*,8:265). Job remains conscious of God's presence in his life and does not rebel against Him. He acknowledges (his own) innocent suffering but this does not

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<sup>126</sup> A change of basis is also detected by Cassirer (1932,151) in his review of the philosophy of the enlightenment and who holds that the basis for theodicy was no longer to be found in metaphysics.

<sup>127</sup> Matter or concern of faith

undermine his faith in God. Or in Seeskin's words, 'What it shows is that Job does not think acknowledging innocent suffering is detrimental to belief in God' (1987,231).

In arguing that God favours Job's view, Kant is being consistent with his rejection of speculative reason exceeding its bounds when claiming knowledge about God. Further, Job's story is demonstrating one consequence of the failure of all philosophical theodicies, namely that, for Kant, theodicy is now a matter of faith and not one of speculative, theoretical, reasoning. Kant has Job acknowledging this when he apologises to God, stating:

Since Job admits having hastily spoken about things which are too high for him and which he does not understand – not *as if wantonly*, for he is conscious of his honesty, but only unwisely (*Failure*,8:266).

The attractiveness of Job's attitude was not new for Kant in 1791 since in 1775 he had written to Lavater praising Job's attitude of not flattering God and for examining his innermost feelings (cf. 10:176). Job's stance is well described by Elizabeth Galbraith (2006,184) 'A refusal to give answers that do not match the facts characterises Job's response to his own suffering'. Such a refusal is, of course, what Kant has done in dismissing the nine attempted theodicies. Kant rejects the interpretation of Job's friends, because they are presuming that they know how God's justice works. In Seeskin's words, 'the comforters [Job's friends] represent speculative reason's attempt to understand God on the basis of principles extrapolated from experience' (1987,236) and which Kant rejected (cf. *Failure*,8:263-64). Galbraith supports this interpretation stating that what Kant 'seem[s] to have recognised in Job is an appropriate, for Kant fully vindicated, religious response to the inadequacy of traditional [philosophical] theodicies' (2006,184).<sup>128</sup> A ringing endorsement of Job's stance comes when Kant states that '[f]or with this disposition he [Job] proved that he did not found his morality on faith, but his faith on morality...the kind of faith that founds not a religion of supplication, but a religion of good life conduct' (*Failure*,8:267). It is no surprise that Kant should express himself in this way having done so twice in his early-Critical period. In *Lectures* we find '*moral theology* is something different from *theological morality*, namely, a morality in which the concept of obligation presupposes the concept of God' (*Lect*,28:1002) whilst earlier, in the first *Critique*, there is:

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<sup>128</sup> It is interesting to note Loades' (1985,42) view that Kant also had a political aim in his consideration of Job. *Failure* was written after the accession of Frederick William II of Prussia and the appointment of Wöllner as Minister of Culture which led to the reduction of religious freedom through censorship edicts and the setting up of courts of theological examination. Loades considers that Wöllner and his circle were the target of one of Kant's conclusions: '...before any court of dogmatic theologians, before a synod, an inquisition, a venerable congregation, or any higher consistory in our times (one alone excepted), Job would have suffered a sad fate' (*Failure*,8:266).

Not theological morals; for that contains moral laws that presuppose the existence of a highest governor of the world, whereas moral theology...is a conviction of the existence of a highest being which grounds itself on moral laws (A632n).

What these views secure is vital to Kant's own theodicy. Whether described as faith or theology, Kant's religious stance is based on morality and, as fully demonstrated in the *Groundwork*, the moral law is based on our rationality.<sup>129</sup> For Kant, it is again *rational* faith in God which underpins his authentic theodicy, not a "God knows best" irrational fideism without intellectual foundation.

Before ending this consideration of authentic theodicy, there are two potential objections to Kant's use of the story of Job which can be anticipated and which could signal possible inconsistencies in Kant's views. A pre-emptive response is possible in both cases. The first is Kant's use of the Book of Job from the Bible which would seem to disqualify Kant's example of an authentic theodicy as it based on a claimed revealed text, a source of moral heteronomy. This is a false trail. Not only has attention been drawn to his special use of "doctrinal", but Kant has also acknowledged the story to be only an allegory, a parable. The historical veracity of Job's story or the possibility of it being a divinely revealed text does not matter here. To achieve its purpose the story need be no more than that, a story by which Kant is illustrating what he considers to be the correct attitude to take in response to apparent moral inequity, namely placing one's trust in God's moral wisdom.

The second potential objection is weightier. When rejecting attempted theodicy **la**, Kant roundly condemned the following out of hand:

[T]he ways of the most high are not our ways...and we err whenever we judge what is law only relatively to human beings in this life to be so absolutely, and thus hold what appears counter-purposive to our view of things from so lowly a standpoint to be such also when considered from the highest (*Failure*,8:258).

However, towards the end of his consideration of Job's tale, Kant relates that God shows Job both 'the beautiful side of creation' but also:

harmful and fearsome things, each of which appears indeed to be purposively arranged for its own sake and that of its species, yet, with respect to other things and to human beings themselves, as destructive...and incompatible with a universal plan established with goodness and wisdom ...God thereby demonstrates an order and a maintenance of the whole which proclaim a wise creator, *even though his ways, inscrutable to us*, must at the same time remain hidden (*Failure*,8:266, my emphasis).

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<sup>129</sup> well expressed by Byrne (2007,95) as '[r]espect for the impartial, universal demands of reason of itself gives moral law authority',



*Prima facie*, a statement more inconsistent with Kant's rejection of theodicy **1a** is difficult to imagine. Galbraith is also concerned by this passage and she leverages her concern to reinforce the view that there is only one moral law, a stance strongly supported in this study.

All the more troubling then, that Kant, despite his aversion to traditional theodicies, should resort to such claims such as that God's ways "remain inscrutable for us". We would be mistaken, however, to interpret Kant's claim as an admission that human moral standards do not apply to the divine, or that God's justice is different from ours (2006,185).

If theodicy **1a** was accepted it would imply that there is another moral law created by God (and unknown to us). This would be a form of voluntarism, diametrically opposed to Kant's position that autonomous reason is the moral law's only source. With Job, however, the context is changed; it is now one of practical reason, namely moral faith. If faith is belief plus trust, then Job's trust in God allows his incomprehension of God's ways without pretending to *know* them. Indeed, to my mind, if faith cannot be equated with knowledge as attested to by Kant, there must always be something which is not known or understood but which is the object of such trust. Indeed, Kant's hero Job is described as a man who 'in the midst of the strongest doubts' (*Rel*,8:267) was still able to affirm his moral faith; as Brachtendorf (2002,83) puts it, Job had *Zweifelglauben*.

Another potential resolution to this second objection is to differentiate between the moral law and God's moral wisdom in applying it. Kant's treatment of the Story of Job contains a disclaimer about our knowledge of the moral order with potentially profound implications. The relevant passage is that cited above from *Failure*,8:266 which continues:

indeed already in the physical order of things, and how much more in the connection of the latter with the moral order (*which is all the more impenetrable to our reason*). (My emphasis)

This remarkable claim seems to turn Kant's argumentation on its head, not only in *Failure* but in his critical works, where moral order is defined by the moral law which for Kant is an expression of reason (cf. *GW*,4:411). As previously emphasised, there are *not* two moralities, one for God and one for human beings. Seeskin stresses this too: '[f]or Kant there is no extraterrestrial morality known only to God. There is one moral law and it is as binding on God as it is on me' (1987,237). However, if moral order is not the same as moral law, could the moral order be God's wisdom in applying the single moral law? I hold that, if it is, then the second objection can be dismissed in a way compatible with Kant's defence of Job. Kant argues that we cannot know God's moral wisdom in the sensible world since this would require that we have knowledge of its grounds in the intelligible world 'and that is an insight to which no mortal can attain' (*Failure*,8:264). Crucial to this was that 'proof of the world-author's moral wisdom in the sensible world' could only be obtained by someone who 'penetrates to the

cognition of the supersensible (intelligible) world'. From the *Groundwork* we know that the moral law is grounded in reason and there is only one moral law for God and humans alike. Therefore Kant's argument that God's artistic wisdom and His moral wisdom cannot be combined in this world only succeeds if God's moral wisdom is something other than the moral law. Otherwise, since we already know both the moral law and God's artistic wisdom in the sensible world, we would be already able to combine them without recourse to the intelligible world. From this, it can be inferred that God's moral wisdom is not a rival moral law but rather His application of that law. This, in essence, is what Job is doing; he is continuing to put his trust in God's moral wisdom thus described.

Having presented the Story of Job as an example of authentic theodicy, Kant ends his treatise with a section called "Concluding Remark" which abstracts important themes from what has gone before. It is not surprising that Kant explores in detail the notion of sincerity since it is this quality that he finds most commendable in Job. It is also an essential component of authentic theodicy, Kant observing that it is a theodicy that 'less depends on subtle reasoning than on sincerity in taking notice of the impotence of our reason' (*Failure*,8:267). For Kant, sincerity is based on truthfulness which he holds is a subjective condition of believing what we say to be true. He contrasts this with truth which is the objective condition where 'we compare what we say with the object of logical judgement (through the understanding)' (*Failure*,8:267). From this Kant is able to define the lie as a declaration counter to truthfulness and not truth. This should come as no surprise when it is recalled that in the *Groundwork* Kant places morality firmly in the intention and not in an act's outcome. This leads Kant to consider the role of conscience and he rightly points out the incoherence of the notion of an erring conscience. Without the datum provided by conscience our actions would be morally random and not even able to be described as (im)moral at all since accountability for our actions would be absent. The concepts of sincerity and conscience are then merged by Kant in the following passage:

I can indeed err in the judgment *in which I believe* to be right, for this belongs to the understanding which alone judges objectively (rightly or wrongly); but in the judgment *whether I in fact believe* to be right (or merely pretend it) I absolutely cannot be mistaken (*Failure*,8:268).

Kant now applies this merger to religious belief and theodicy. His example is Job's friends where these said what they did not believe in an attempt to please God. Kant holds this to be lying with the lie 'the most absurd (before a render of hearts [God]): it is also the most sinful' (*Failure*,8:269). He also prefigures *Religion* in that he has little time for purely external religious observance and in condemning those who do not attend to the inward nature of their claimed beliefs.

[I]f someone says to himself (or – what is one and the same in religious professions – before God) that *he believes*, without perhaps casting even a single glimpse into himself...then such a person *lies* (*Failure*,8:268).

This last passage lends strong support to the claim that Kant is not a fideist. Failure to look inside himself and examine the basis of his faith in God's existence and the relationship with Him is the last thing of which Kant could be accused whether in *Failure*, his earlier second *Critique*, or in *Religion* to follow. This passage above also has an echo of Socrates' "the unexamined life is not worth living"; for Kant, it is clear that the unexamined faith was not worth having.

By including his commentary on the Story of Job, Kant has offered us not only an example of the failure of theodicies based on speculative reason (the arguments of Job's friends) but also how only a non-philosophical theodicy based on trust in God could work. However, it could still be argued that Kant has, despite the foregoing, merely adopted the fideist position of blind trust in God's ways which he rejected so firmly, when considering theodicy **Ia**. I do not consider such an argument to be sound. We have already noted that the rejection of **Ia** was on the grounds of claimed knowledge of God but Kant is making his claim here based on practical, moral grounds and certainly not contradicting reason *tout court* as the fideist does. It is this move on Kant's part which creates the middle ground in the matter of reconciling God and evil. Kant is rejecting the simple disjunctive choice between theodicy based on theoretical/speculative reason and fideism. Indeed, he rejects both but advances a reconciliation still based on reason. Byrne (2007,123) offers a similar account of Kant's position in which he (Byrne) concedes that it is possible to allow a very thin line to be drawn between a theodicy based on moral faith and a faith based on a more fideistic hope that God will somehow make things alright.

An examination of Kant's authentic theodicy would not be complete, however, without testing it against his definition of theodicy:

*By "theodicy" we understand the defence of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counter-purposive in the world – We call this "the defending of God's cause" (Failure,8:255).*

Three significant concerns arise. First, whilst it is reason which sets out the charge against God, Kant's authentic theodicy seems not to respond in those terms. Rather it is based on putting one's trust in God's moral wisdom in the manner of Job. It can also be asked whether Kant in his authentic theodicy has fully addressed the one type of evil which I have argued remains in his taxonomy, namely, moral evil. Again, the example of authentic theodicy which Kant puts forward deals with the seeming injustice of Job's misfortunes but injustice is a mismatch in the

relationship between moral behaviour and happiness, whether between virtue and unhappiness or between transgression of the moral law and happiness. In his theodicy, Kant does not go to the root of the problem, rather stopping short and not offering a reasoned explanation for the co-existence of moral evil *per se* and a theistic God with the conventional moral attributes. Thus it could be argued, as Busche does, (cf.2013,236) that Kant has not met the challenge which he himself set.

Second, as Kant's authentic theodicy is the only one that he eventually advanced, it can also be asked whether this theodicy has left any other substantial charges against God unaddressed. I believe this to be the case. In *New Elucidation*, Kant's fictional character Caius raised the problem of God's foreknowledge. Whilst granting that men freely choose to commit evil, the problem is that an omniscient God nevertheless chose to create in knowledge that evil would ensue and so He bears an indirect but ultimate responsibility for that evil. Now for that charge to stick it would require acceptance of the premise that to create under such circumstances is worse than not to create at all. God's defender could well claim the converse, namely that creation with the opportunity for evil is better than no creation at all. Further, any attempt to resolve this dilemma by asserting that God is an entity which *must* create would involve a knowledge claim about God inadmissible under Kant's critical epistemology. One possible solution is to disarm the problem and claim that foreknowledge applies to the future, a temporal concept. But the intelligible world of God is atemporal and thus foreknowledge is an incoherent anthropomorphic concept in that world. The problem is now that previously identified by Neiman: '[i]n the process of defending God, [we have] disempowered Him' (2002,26). Alternatively, God's foreknowledge could be denied *tout court* as in the Socinian heresy but this runs into the Neiman objection too. Regardless of the position taken with respect to this problem, the key issue for this study is that Kant's authentic theodicy does not even defend God on this charge let alone achieve the better result of demonstrating His innocence. Kant is silent on this issue.

Third, there is the lingering concern that, with his own authentic theodicy, Kant has still only introduced a variant on theodicy **1a** which he rejected out of hand. It will be recalled that that theodicy was based on the notion of God having a different (but still unknown) system of moral law. In authentic theodicy, Kant appeals to God's moral wisdom (but still unknown) in applying the one moral law. Now, as already acknowledged, Kant's defender could say that in the first case the argument was based on inadmissible theoretical reason whilst in the second the argument was based on practical reason. That point can be granted without invalidating the claim they nevertheless can both be termed theodicies of ignorance. Drawing on the same property, Paul Rateau (2009,65) characterises authentic theodicy as one of postponement

where the full understanding of God's moral wisdom is one of the rewards of the elect in the next life. Should Rorty's interpretation be correct, we can then note the similarity with theodicy IIIc which Kant rejected but which pointed to 'a future world [where] a different order of things will obtain'. Thus Kant could be accused of merely substituting another would-be theodicy of postponement for an earlier unsuccessful variant.

Nonetheless, Kant's Concluding Remark in *Failure* on sincerity needs to be fully weighed together with his earlier words: 'the human being is justified, as rational, in testing all claims, all doctrines which impose respect on him, before he submits himself to them, so that this respect may be sincere and not feigned' (*Failure*,8:255). In the light of these statements, the sincerity with which Kant is searching for a successful theodicy cannot, with good reason, be doubted. As we have seen, Kant, in his eyes, has been successful in discovering and describing a theodicy of the middle ground. However, this does not entail that authentic theodicy *per se* is a success.

The three concerns above relating to authentic theodicy are linked by a common thread. It has been emphasised at a number of places in the study that with theodicy we are concerned with finding a reasoned explanation which reconciles the apparently irreconcilable, namely God and evil. Much attention has been paid to showing that, for Kant, "reasoned" was well supported by the use of practical, moral, reason. But what of "explanation"? When we look again at the theodicies which Kant considers, including his own, a significant feature emerges. All nine philosophical theodicies were definitely offering an attempted explanation. Their failure was, at root, the failure of theoretical reason. However, with his own authentic theodicy, Kant is no longer offering any explanation. With the first concern listed above, Kant is offering no explanation for God's allowance of moral evil in the world. With the second, Kant is offering no explanation of why God chose to create knowing that evil would result. With the third, Kant is indeed offering no explanation, but rather offering just a means of coming to terms with the *lack* of an explanation of how moral evil and God could be compatible. His authentic theodicy is instead just based on trust in the moral wisdom of God. It is a means of getting-by in the face of moral evil which Rorty is correct in terming a theodicy of postponement. If there is a reconciliation occurring it seems to be one between man and evil, not God and evil. However, there are counters available to those who would reject the case which I have put forward and would support Kant in this matter. The first is that that demanding an explanation merely takes us full circle back to philosophical theodicies. These attempt to provide an explanation but Kant has shown that they must fail and that they do so *necessarily*. It was exactly this failure which prompted his search for an alternative in the first place. The second possible counter is that Kant has dispensed with knowledge to make room for faith (Bxxx) but a

demand for an explanation is a demand for knowledge which Kant states *cannot* be supplied. However, these counters can be challenged in their turn, drawing on a statement from Kant himself. Thirty-six years earlier in his pre-Critical period, Kant in *New Elucidation* gave every appearance of endorsing the need for explanation with the following:

[T]he world contains a number of evils. What is being sought is not the ground *that*, in other words, not the grounds of knowing, for experience takes its place. What has to be specified is the ground *why*, that is to say, the ground of becoming (NE,1:392).

In turn, Kant's supporter could dismiss this as just an early career stance now overtaken by his mature views, namely those in the first *Critique* and *Failure*...

Notwithstanding these possible counters, on the basis of the three concerns outlined, I hold that a conclusion that Kant's authentic theodicy fails is justified. In that case, the study could now be drawn to an appropriate close. However, I will not be taking this course, not because of a cavalier dismissal of the three concerns, but rather for three substantial reasons. First, the reader, perhaps offering one of the counters outlined, might not accept that the three concerns above form a strong enough case for concluding that authentic theodicy fails. In such circumstances, further arguments can be put forward for his/her consideration. Second, the consequences of such a conclusion are serious enough that, in a way, Kant is owed another effort on our part to establish the feasibility of his theodicy. Third, we should not stop prematurely, leaving stones unturned. To do so, and leave unexplored significant avenues with the potential to counter the three concerns above and establish after all the viability of authentic theodicy, could leave us open to Kant's charge of 'lazy reason'. Specifically, stopping now would leave authentic theodicy's moral philosophical foundation unexamined. Thus, treating as provisional the conclusion that authentic theodicy fails in the ways described in this chapter, the study continues and examines the Highest Good in more detail.

## **Chapter 10 - The Highest Good in Concept and Practice**

### **The Nature of the Highest Good**

In closing the previous chapter, reference was made to investigating the moral philosophical foundation upon which authentic theodicy stood. We have seen that this theodicy depends on moral faith. However, that faith requires an object, God. After dismissing the three theoretical proofs in the first *Critique*, the only proof of God's existence now available to Kant is the moral one from the second. Thus moral faith depends on the moral proof. However, the latter depends crucially upon Kant's concept of the Highest Good being able to do the work he

envisages for it. An appropriate analogy is thus that of a chain: authentic theodicy - moral faith - moral proof - Highest Good. This I term the chain of dependency, and putting it to the test is the aim of this chapter. Clearly, for authentic theodicy to succeed, all the links in the chain must be sound. As we move along the chain it will soon become apparent that the weakest link is the Highest Good. Thus the majority of the chapter is devoted to this controversial topic. The literature on the Highest Good is extensive and a complete examination of this topic would greatly exceed the scope available to this study. Nevertheless, as the success of Kant's authentic theodicy ultimately depends on the Highest Good, its investigation in the context of theodicy is essential. In doing this the chapter will progress towards delivering a firm conclusion on authentic theodicy's success or otherwise.

The first link in the chain is moral faith. This is the immediate basis on which authentic theodicy rests as Kant shows with Job. In the Canon of the first *Critique* Kant prefigures his significant move in the second *Critique* in stating that 'no one will ever be able to boast that he **knows** there is a God and a future life...No, the conviction is not **logical** but **moral** certainty' (A828/B856). This adds force to the argument that one can never prove God's existence because knowledge of such an existence is denied to us. Nevertheless, according to Kant, the moral certainty to which he refers is still open to us, but not as any form of knowledge.

In the dialectic of practical reason of the Second *Critique*, when considering the question of a duty towards the Highest Good (which will be examined in detail later in the chapter), Kant states that:

Now, it was a duty for us to promote the highest good: hence there is in us not merely the warrant but also the necessity...to presuppose the possibility of this highest good, which since it is possible only under the condition of the existence of God, connects the presupposition of the existence of God inseparable with duty; that it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God (*CPR*,5:125).

This passage highlights another significant aspect of Kant's thought and our first concern, the nature of the moral proof. With the words 'it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God' it is reasonable to allow that Kant is claiming that his argument is one for God's existence. However, a few sentences later, Kant argues that we have a duty to 'produce and promote the highest good' and, since *ought* implies *can*, it must be possible, and 'our reason finds this thinkable only on the presupposition of a supreme intelligence'. He then states that if this assumption would be a product of theoretical reason it would be a *hypothesis*, but when it results from a need of practical purposes 'it can be called *belief*, and indeed a pure *rational belief*'. Thus Kant considers he has shown that the argument is a product of practical reason. Namely, it is necessary, on moral grounds, to believe in God's existence which is a quite

different result from a moral proof of God's existence. Since this belief is grounded on morality, it can reasonably be termed moral faith. Moreover, with his insistence that such a belief is rational, we again have evidence that Kant, throughout his career, strove to retain a place for God in his philosophical system but never at the cost of abandoning reason's primacy. This can be seen at once from the full title of *Religion* - Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason.

Moving to the third *Critique*, in §87 Kant provides us with the following clear statement:

This moral argument is not meant to provide an objectively valid proof of the existence of God, nor meant to prove to the doubter that there is a God...Hence it is a **subjective** argument, sufficient for moral beings' (CPJ,5:450-51n)

Recalling Kant's tripartite taxonomy of propositional attitudes within *Fürwahrhalten* that belief is objectively unwarranted but subjectively warranted, it is this moral proof that provides the required subjective warrant. Kant adds two more unambiguous statements which affirm that belief in God is warranted on moral grounds, firstly:

Objects that must be conceived *a priori* in relation to the use of pure practical reason in accordance with duty...but which are excessive for its theoretical use are mere **matters of faith**. (CPJ,5:469) (Kant's emphasis in bold).

And then specifying two such objects:

This commanded effect, **together with the sole conditions of its possibility that are conceivable for us**, namely the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are **matters of faith** (res fidei)<sup>130</sup> (CPJ,5:469) (Kant's emphasis in bold)

From these two citations, it can be seen that Kant considers his proof to be an *a priori* one using our rational powers. It is also transcendental in nature as his aim is to identify the grounds of possibility of the Highest Good. Moreover, the citations show that the faith referred to is indeed a moral one which Kant confirms when he states that 'the affirmation involved in matters of faith, however, is an affirmation in a purely practical aspect, i.e., a moral faith'(CPJ,5:470). This is important in considering Kant's authentic theodicy which in *Failure* is also described as a matter of faith – *eine Glaubenssache*. In my view, the faith Kant refers to in *Failure* is the same moral faith which he has identified here just one year before in the third *Critique*. This he confirms with the statement that 'Faith (simply so called) is trust in the attainment of an aim the promotion of which it is not possible for us to have insight into ... The

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<sup>130</sup> Kant makes clear in a footnote that matters of faith are not articles of faith which are those credal propositions the assent to which a particular religious confession requires of its members.



faith, therefore, which is related to particular objects that are not objects of possible knowledge or opinion ... is entirely moral' (*CPJ*,5:472)<sup>131</sup>. Once more, this is the faith of Job.

From these considerations, I conclude that, with reliance upon a moral faith, the first link in the chain of dependency and the *proximate* support for Kant's authentic theodicy, is sound. Nevertheless, we must then ask whether the postulation of God, moral faith's object, is soundly based, relying as it does on the moral proof which forms the next link in the chain. For Job, moral faith meant a simple but complete faith in God's moral wisdom, all his experiences to the contrary notwithstanding. For Kant, it meant more than the moral law alone. It also encompassed happiness in a synthetic proportional relationship with observance of the moral law to fashion the Highest Good. It is this which grounds the two postulates of practical reason in the second *Critique* which constitute the moral proof (cf. *CPR*,5:122-32). According to Kant, we have a duty to promote the Highest Good over and above the duty to obey the moral law but we cannot have a duty to achieve the impossible – ought presupposes can - and thus he can proceed to the practical postulates. But it must be asked at once how the *duty* to bring about the Highest Good arises. The moral law is grounded in our autonomous rationality and, by Kant's own account, it is self-sufficient. Yet, with the moral proof he appears to be compromising autonomy by re-introducing considerations of happiness which he had firmly dismissed as a possible basis for the moral law in the earlier *Groundwork*. All this demands a deeper look at the Highest Good.

That there are multiple interpretations of the term "highest good" is perhaps indicative of the controversy which surrounds the issue. I consider that four basic variants can be discerned, the first two of which are given by Kant in the second *Critique* (cf. *CPR*,5:100).

1. The *supreme* Highest Good – HG(S): *Supremum*, the supreme good, the highest *individual* good. According to Kant this is virtue, compliance with the moral law. This is never doubted by Kant.
2. The *total* Highest Good – HG(T): *Consumatum*, the complete good, the *total* of individual goods. If there are other goods in addition to the *Supremum*, HG(T) must exceed HG(S) in any calculus of the Highest Good<sup>132</sup>.

The next two variants are specific instances of HG(T):

3. The *proportionate* Highest Good – HG(P): Complying with the moral law, and happiness in proper proportion to such compliance. In other words, the greater the

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<sup>131</sup> This is consistent with the three modes of *Fürwahrhalten*:- knowledge/belief/opinion.

<sup>132</sup> Wood (1970) helpfully terms HG(T) the *Summum Bonum* indicating clearly that individual goods have been added together.

compliance, the greater the happiness. Steven Smith (1984,173) terms this a juridical conception. In this interpretation it is the proportionality which is paramount. The degree of virtue displayed seems less important which is somewhat counter-intuitive since the case of the unhappy evil man would meet this specification.

4. The *maximal* Highest Good – HG(M): the maximum HG(P) i.e. complete compliance coupled with complete happiness. For Kant this is holiness coupled with bliss. This is where all descriptions of the Highest Good converge and thus it would also be the maximal HG(T).

Adding complexity to any consideration of the Highest Good are four more, sometimes inter-related, variables which overlay the above four-way classification. Thankfully, not all of the additional four variables apply to each of the four basic variants above and so the researcher does not have to contend with sixteen logically possible Highest Goods.

- a. Kant sometimes refers to the Highest Good as something to be *achieved*; at other times, something to be *pursued*. This could be either HG(P) or HG(M).
- b. If the Highest Good is something to be achieved, it must be *constitutive* otherwise one could not know whether it had been achieved. If only to be pursued it could be (i) constitutive but unobtainable, or (ii) just a *regulative* ideal to focus and motivate our efforts to comply with the moral law. Again that could be HG(M) or HG(P). If it is constitutive and only HG(P) how could we know the measurable level which is to be achieved? Thus a defensible *constitutive* HG could only be HG(M) but there are difficulties concerning holiness which will be examined later.
- c. Sometimes Kant refers to the Highest Good as immanent, namely to be pursued in the sensible world. At other times, and in most cases, it applies to an intelligible, future, world.
- d. As a corollary of c., is the Highest Good is something to be achieved/pursued at an individual level, or, something to be achieved/pursued collectively, at a societal level?

### **Fundamental Questions**

To reduce the number of possible Highest Goods in play, the two fundamental questions tabled at a. and c. above must be answered, namely in which world, the sensible or intelligible, the Highest Good is to be sought and whether the Highest Good is to be achieved or merely pursued. Unhelpfully, in Kant's writings, for both questions, there are opposing indications, a viewed shared by Andrews Reath (1988,607). However, if these questions remain open, coming to a conclusion on whether Kant's Highest Good can do the work he intends for it becomes an order of magnitude more difficult. Specifically, each variant of the Highest Good

would require evaluation in multiple scenarios and this would most likely lead to an inconclusive result.

### *The World of the Highest Good*

What is at stake in addressing this issue is well illustrated by Reath:

A theological conception of the Highest Good is that it would be a state of affairs that comes about in another world through the activity of God. By contrast, a secular conception of the Highest Good can be described entirely in naturalistic terms, as a state of affairs to be achieved in *this* world, through *human* activity (1988,601).

If some measure of HG(P), is realisable in our present sensible world, we could already discharge our supposed duty towards the Highest Good in this world. So if the domain of the Highest Good is the sensible world, there would be no need for Kant to postulate immortality and God. Kant would have then failed to obtain what I hold to be one of his continuing objectives, namely securing/retaining a place for God in his philosophical system.

Various statements in the second *Critique* leave no doubt that Kant saw the Highest Good as impossible in the sensible world. One such is:<sup>133</sup>

[A]ny practical connection of causes and effects in the world, as a result of the determination of the will, does not depend upon the moral dispositions of the will but upon knowledge of the laws of nature and the physical ability to use them for one's purposes; consequently, no necessary connection of happiness with virtue in the world, adequate to the highest good, can be expected from the most meticulous observance of moral laws. (*CPR*,5:113).

This states that the world of the Highest Good is not the sensible one and hence, by implication, it must be the intelligible one. However, there are also explicit statements supporting the latter in the Canon of the first *Critique*. For example:

Thus happiness in exact proportion with the morality of rational beings, through which they are worthy of it, alone constitutes the highest good of a world into which we must without exception transpose ourselves in accordance with the precepts of pure but practical reason, and which, of course, is only an intelligible world, since the sensible world does not promise us that sort of systematic unity of ends (A814/B842).

This is reinforced at *CPR*,5:115 when Kant states that 'we see ourselves obliged to seek the possibility of the Highest Good...in the context of an intelligible world'.

Further, I consider that there is another available argument against the Highest Good in the sensible world which does not come from direct statements by Kant on the issue, but which can be inferred from his views elsewhere. The Highest Good specifies a state where the virtuous are happy in proportion to the degree to which they are virtuous. But if the Highest

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<sup>133</sup> See also *CPR*,5:124 and 5:128 for confirmation.

Good was a matter of the sensible world what would happiness consist in? Whilst Kant rightly says that happiness is indeterminate, it is nevertheless reasonable, to my mind, to hold that it includes, in some measure, two components which the individual cannot deliver.

- Physical harm, such as tsunamis and illnesses, brings much suffering and unhappiness in its wake. So the first source of happiness would be freedom from physical harm.
- We can be the beneficiary of others' moral actions. However, the reverse seems more often to be the case and much suffering (unhappiness) flows from others' immoral (in)actions. Thus the second source of happiness is freedom from the effects of other's immoral (in)actions.

The happiness of the Highest Good in the sensible world cannot include non-contingent freedom from physical harm without Kant abandoning his pre-Critical stance concerning the laws of nature. Kant viewed these laws as universal in operation, unchanging in nature, and blind to morality. He was quite prepared to recognise that the good can suffer undeserved physical harm. Considering the second possible component, others' immoral actions often harm us. This is problematic if we have the duty to pursue the Highest Good in the sensible world. Kant is clear that we are not responsible for the (im)moral actions of others. The other side of this same coin is well presented by Auxter: 'the individual agent does not have the physical ability to realise the moral order in this world, since its realisation depends on the cooperation of every moral agent, and it is not within one's power to ensure this' (1979,129). Thus, if component two were to be part of the happiness within the Highest Good, we cannot be held to have a duty towards it.

One component of individual happiness which would remain is the happiness permitted by the moral law but this does not require a further duty concerning the Highest Good. I accept that individual happiness is *conditioned* by compliance with the moral law. This is a key point in the *Groundwork*. The moral law is clear; of those inclinations which lead to one's happiness, only those which do not conflict with the moral law may be taken up into one's maxims and subsequent actions. But, this is not the same as the agent being the beneficiary of happiness *proportionate* to his/her virtue. Proportionality is an altogether different relation in which benefits are directed towards the good and natural harm away from them. Differentiation between "conditioned" and "proportioned" is also advocated by Reath. However, this is not a problem for him because he sees the former as applying in the sensible world as part of the secular Highest Good which he champions. He sees that "proportioned" as only applicable to a future intelligible world where God does the proportioning in the theological account of the

Highest Good which he rejects (1988,605). Certainly, without non-contingent freedom from the harm and suffering highlighted above, happiness *cannot* be proportionate in the sensible world for the virtuous person.

From the foregoing arguments, I draw the conclusion that the world applicable to the Highest Good is the intelligible. Consequently, only that world will be considered in the further discussion of the Highest Good in this study. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that some scholars, such as Reath, see the Highest Good as a matter for the sensible world but this cannot be the Highest Good which Kant envisaged if he is to secure/retain a place for God in his moral philosophy. As a corollary, the Highest Good as a possible social goal can also be excluded. If the Highest Good were to be interpreted as a social/communal goal rather than an individual one, this could be seen as virtue and happiness (a form of HG(P)) being achieved together. It would require, however, that the Highest Good was again something to be achieved in the sensible world but this we have ruled out. Obliquely supporting this is the argument that, if happiness includes the happiness of others which we have a duty to promote through our moral actions and thus a social rather than an individual goal, then the Highest Good is no more than the moral law in application. Consequently, there would again be no need for a separate duty towards the Highest Good over and above that to obey the moral law.

#### *Achievement or only Pursuit of the Highest Good?*<sup>134</sup>

This is the more difficult of the two fundamental questions. The available evidence is considered in broadly chronological order since the possibility that Kant's stance changed over time cannot be prematurely ruled out.

In the first *Critique*, the Highest Good is considered in the Canon, in particular when dealing with the second of the three questions which Kant presents 'what should I do?' There Kant does not explicitly address the question of achievement or pursuit but nevertheless from the tone of the citation from A814 above, it is reasonable to judge that Kant was looking forward to the intelligible world in which the Highest Good could be *achieved*. In contrast, Byrne (2007,111) draws attention to a short passage from the same work where Kant states that 'no human being will ever act adequately to what the pure idea of virtue contains' which suggests that achievement is not possible and consequently we would be left with pursuit (cf.A315/B371-2).

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<sup>134</sup> Whilst achievement and pursuit are discussed as the alternatives, it is recognised that any achievement would be preceded by a period of pursuit. This caveat will not be explicitly stated each time achievement is discussed for reasons of readability.

In *Lectures*, Kant is recorded as stating that '[m]oral perfection in this life will be followed by moral growth in the next. After death the human being will continue with his development...and thus if in this world he strives to act in a morally good way and gradually attains to moral accomplishment, he may hope to continue his moral education there' (*Lect*,28:1085). Passing over the question how one can improve on moral perfection, this passage again suggests that pursuit towards eventual achievement (accomplishment) is foreseen. Consideration of change in a future, intelligible, world is postponed until application of the Highest Good in practice is discussed.

In the Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason in the second *Critique*, having claimed that the 'production' of the Highest Good is the necessary object of a will determined by the moral law (cf. *CPR*,5:122), Kant goes on to say that complete conformity is the supreme condition of the Highest Good.<sup>135</sup> Further, this conformity must be possible since it is part of the command to 'promote the object'. This leaves a doubt whether the object of the command is the complete conformity (achievement) or merely promotion (pursuit) but Kant then states that 'complete conformity of the will with the moral law is holiness [*Heiligkeit*]' (*CPR*,5:122), one component of HG(M). This I judge to be a significant move since conformity with the moral law has been previously termed virtue (*Tugend*). This is not an accidental slip on Kant's part as he explicitly distinguishes between the two terms:<sup>136</sup>

The moral law is holy (inflexible) and demands holiness of morals, although all moral perfection that a human being can attain is only virtue, that is, a disposition conformed with law from respect for law (*CPR*,5:128).

With holiness now representing an increased requirement, pursuit is substituted for achievement. This is done by the introduction of "endless" and the explicit statement that 'practical progress' is now the object in the following passage.

Since it [complete conformity] is nevertheless required as practically necessary, it can only be found in an endless progress toward that complete conformity, and in accordance with principles of pure practical reason it is necessary to assume such a practical progress as the real object of our will (*CPR*,5:122).

The passage also introduces another complexity. It is *prima facie* contradictory to require complete conformity and yet to predict endless progress with its consequence that the required complete conformity is never achieved. An additional something is required to close the gap. We will see later that this something is God. That endless progress is all that is possible is confirmed by Kant in subsequently stating that '[f]or a rational but finite being only

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<sup>135</sup> HG(M) in the definition schema above.

<sup>136</sup> Kant does not use the term virtue thereafter in the second *Critique* except in the Doctrine of the Method of Pure Practical reason which is unrelated to the Highest Good.

endless progress from lower to higher stages of moral perfection is possible' and 'thus he [man] cannot hope, either here or in any foreseeable future moment of his existence, to be fully adequate to God's will' (CPR,5:123).

The result is that holiness cannot be achieved by us in *any* world if existence is taken to mean more than just our current life in the sensible world. Elsewhere, Kant states that only a holy will is capable of complete and continuous compliance with the moral law. A being with a holy will is only capable of the good, it cannot do otherwise. Because it is not capable of the choice for evil, such a being cannot be moral as Kant describes this. As a result of raising the requirement to holiness, an unavoidably sub-optimal HG(P) must suffice. But this re-raises the problem of how we could know what level of HG(P) would be sufficient in God's eyes to count as achievement. Complete holiness requires a holy will but only God has this. Given the assumption that we are not to become gods, could Kant be suggesting a different holiness here, as Byrne ponders (2000,113)? Regrettably, Kant provides no clue in this regard. These considerations reinforce the view that Kant abandoned achievement since using "endless" implies that it will never be achieved, at least when viewed temporally. Nevertheless, it is on the basis of endless progress that Kant sets out his first postulate of pure practical reason, immortality:

This endless progress is, however, possible only on the presupposition of the existence and personality of the same rational being continuing endlessly...Hence the highest good is practically possible only the presupposition of the immortality of the soul (CPR,5:122).

The citation from A814 showed clearly that the Highest Good is realised in the *intelligible* world. However, this world is atemporal and non-spatial so that the former characteristic is only compatible with the notion of 'endless progress' where "endless" is understood as "timeless". So far so good, but resolving that issue just redirects concern as to what is "progress" in such a world is since progress entails change over time. Again, this question is put to one side until the application of the Highest Good in practice is considered.

The next indication of Kant's evolving thought on pursuit/achievement comes when he advances the second practical postulate. This is advanced to secure the correct relationship between the Highest Good's two components. However, Kant has established that there is no connection between them in the sensible world (cf. CPR,5:124/128). Nevertheless, there *must* be such a connection according to Kant because of our duty towards the Highest Good.

In the practical task of pure reason, that is, in the necessary pursuit of the highest good, such a connection is postulated as necessary: we ought to strive to promote the highest good (which must therefore be possible) (CPR,5:125).

Kant then considers what is needed to provide the required connection. Certainly humans cannot make the connection since we are unable to judge whether a person is virtuous since we can only see the effect of actions and not their motivation (cf. *GW*,4:407). According to him, a being is needed who is the cause of nature but not in nature and has the ability to “see” into both the intelligible and sensible worlds. In short, Kant finds that such a being is God which he affirms in the following passage:

Now, it was a duty for us to promote the highest good: hence there is in us not merely the warrant but also the necessity...to presuppose the possibility of this highest good, which since it is possible only under the condition of the existence of God, connects the presupposition of the existence of God inseparable with duty; that it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God (*CPR*,5:125).

It can be noted that in both the above passages it is promoting not achieving the Highest Good which Kant sees as a duty. In the third *Critique*<sup>137</sup>, the thought that Kant is endorsing pursuit rather than achievement is reinforced, twice, firstly in using the word "strive":

[Y]et it [the moral law] also determines for us, and indeed does so *a priori*, a final end, to strive after which it makes obligatory for us, and this is the **highest good in the world** possible through freedom (*CPJ*,5:450).

In the continuation, he then uses the word "promote":

Now for us to promote this [happiness in consensus with morality] (as far as happiness is concerned) as far as lies in our power to do so is commanded by the moral law, let the outcome of this effort be whatever it will (*CPJ*,5:451).

Finally, considering his late-career (1797) *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant gives us the following: '[v]irtue is always in *progress* and yet always starts *from the beginning*. - It is always in progress because, considered *objectively*, it is an ideal and unattainable, while yet constant approximation to it is a duty' (*MM*,6:409). Whilst Kant continues to stress our duty, he clearly sees the best we can do is an asymptotic approach, never reaching an ideal, in other words, a pursuit. Such a reading is confirmed later in that work when Kant states that 'it is a human being's duty to *strive* for this perfection but not to *reach* it in this life and his compliance with this duty can, accordingly, consist only in continual progress' (*MM*,6:446).

Taking all these sources into account, it is clear that Kant, unhelpfully, never provided an unambiguous statement whether the Highest Good is to be achieved or pursued. However, most evidence points towards the latter. Further, the passages in which the Highest Good's achievement is foreseen occur more often in the earlier works considered. Accordingly, I judge that Kant originally thought in terms of achievement but later lessened the requirement to just pursuit. Doing that, however, did not mean an end to problems, two of which stand out

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<sup>137</sup> Kant uses the term "virtue" again in this work but not connection with the Highest Good.



at this stage. Firstly, there is the question how pursuit and moral progress can be meaningful once that part of our life spent in the sensible world comes to an end. Secondly, with only pursuit possible, we are, in effect, trusting God to either close or disregard the gap between the level of virtue we reach and the complete conformity with the moral law required of us. Without that we could not reach the required end-state of perfected virtue/holiness.

But in response to the two fundamental questions with which we started, an intermediate summation on the Highest Good is now possible. Namely, in order to test Kant's concept of the Highest Good we, in this study, are concerned with its pursuit in the intelligible world. The remaining discussion in this chapter will thus be set in that context. This is not to be read, however, that we, as moral agents, are no longer concerned with the pursuit of virtue in *this* world.

### **The Duty towards the Highest Good**

That Kant recognises what is at stake with the linkage between the duty towards the Highest Good and God is shown in the following from the third *Critique*.

Consequently, the concept of God acquires the distinction of counting as a matter of faith in our affirmation only through its relation to our object of duty, as the condition of the possibility of attaining the final end [the Highest Good] of that duty (CPJ,5:470).

This duty is the aspect upon which the controversy in the extensive literature surrounding the Highest Good is most often centred. As we have seen, the Highest Good is introduced in the first *Critique*, but it is in the second where it is put under serious load. Here the Highest Good is used (i) to postulate immortality because it cannot be achieved in this life and (ii) to postulate God's existence as the only entity that can ensure the proper relationship between the Highest Good's two components (cf. *CPR*,5:123-5). As controversial as these postulates are they are not the root of the problem. Rather, this is that Kant holds that we have a *duty* to achieve the Highest Good. Here the key word is duty, an ought. Since for Kant "ought" presupposes "can"<sup>138</sup>, without a confirmed duty toward the Highest Good, he cannot advance his practical postulates. Jeffrie Murphy (1965,104) identifies this duty to promote the Highest Good as both the fulcrum and the weak point of Kant's case. Frederick Beiser adopts a similar stance, framing his objection as:

Kant assumes that we have a duty to promote the highest good; but some sceptics question even this.<sup>139</sup> They find a circle in his reasoning: Kant reasons from the duty to the conditions of its possibility, which he must first prove before he can assume the duty. Whatever its merits, this

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<sup>138</sup> Kant's clearest statement of this is at *Rel*,6:62: 'We *ought* to conform to it, and therefore we must *be able* to'.

<sup>139</sup> Referring to G.E. Schulze whom Beiser credits with first raising this objection in 1793.

objection raises a controversial question: What is the basis for our duty to promote the highest good? Kant seems to think that such a duty follows straightforwardly from the categorical imperative; but he never provides a deduction of it. Some scholars contend that there cannot be, on Kant's own principles, any such duty,<sup>140</sup> others claim that it plays a fundamental role so that it cannot be derived from any higher principle.<sup>141</sup> (2006,604)

With this, Beiser is questioning transcendental argumentation *per se*, from the duty to the conditions of its possibility. Rather, he is suggesting the reverse, namely that Kant must first prove immortality and God before the duty can be established. By Kant's own argument, if there is neither immortality nor God, there can be no duty and we would have no obligation towards it since it would be impossible. Moreover, Beiser's mention of a deduction again raises a crucial issue. In order to have a duty toward the Highest Good Kant must provide a deduction but such cannot be based on our experience of the world. In other words, it must be derived *a priori*, through pure practical reason, the same manner in which Kant has shown in the *Groundwork* that we have a duty to obey the moral law. Earlier, we saw Kant explicitly acknowledging the nature of the required deduction at *CPI*,5:450/469 and there is another acknowledgement of such apriority in *Religion*:

But that every human being ought [i.e. has a duty] to make the highest possible good in the world his own ultimate end is a synthetic practical proposition *a priori*, that is, an objective-practical proposition given through pure reason (*Rel*,6:7n).

With this it is clear that Kant also holds that we have a duty towards the Highest Good over and above our duty to comply with the moral law<sup>142</sup>. This is the controversial step which Kant must substantiate but the need to do so would appear to present Kant with a dilemma, both horns of which I judge as unacceptable to him. The first is that the Highest Good is to be found by analysis already present within Categorical Imperative on which the moral law is based. In that case, the duty toward the moral law would already include a duty regarding the Highest Good. Should Kant grasp this horn, the practical postulates would then be unneeded. Moreover, the duty concerning the moral law has been established *a priori* in the *Groundwork*, not only without calling on happiness, but specifically rejecting it as the moral law's possible basis. So we cannot expect to find within our duty towards the moral law any mention of happiness, the Highest Good's second and material component. Indeed, Kant explicitly rejects this horn when, in referring to the Highest Good, he states that it is 'a synthetic *a priori* proposition...yet it exceeds the concept of duty that morality contains...and hence cannot be analytically evolved out of morality' (*Rel*,6:6n). The second horn is equally unattractive. This

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<sup>140</sup> Referring to Lewis White Beck (1960)

<sup>141</sup> Referring to John Silber (1959)

<sup>142</sup> Another statement to this effect is to be found at *CPI*,5:453

would be to substantiate the supposed duty without calling on the moral law. In this situation, Kant would then risk the accusation that the moral law was no longer self-sufficient as shown in the *Groundwork*. In other words, something beyond the moral law is required to secure his moral philosophical system, a difficulty well captured by Reath:

To allow that there are moral principles that are independent of the law, or prior to it, would violate the autonomy of pure practical reason in a deeper sense, by making it subject to principles that it does not generate out of itself (1988,612).

From the *Groundwork* we know too that inclinations, the satisfaction of which produces happiness in the sensible world, are subordinate to the moral law but nowhere does he show that we have a duty to pursue our own happiness. On the contrary, Kant states that trying to establish such a duty would be otiose, serving no practical purpose or result (cf.*Rel*,6:6n). Additionally, whilst Kant shows that we have a duty to pursue happiness of others through our compliance with the moral law, its pursuit to a determinate end is easier said than done since the happiness of others is as indeterminate and transient as our own.

Whilst acknowledging the power of the old dictum "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence", the crucial point is, after a diligent search, no *a priori* deduction by Kant of the *duty* in respect of the Highest Good is to be found. Recognising that the moral law could not be founded in outer experience, in the *Groundwork*, Kant looked within the only other available source, himself. There he found rationality as a brute fact, and it was on this rationality that he established the Categorical Imperative which lies at the heart of the moral law. In the second *Critique* there is no comparable undertaking in respect of the Highest Good. In consequence, without establishing our duty in respect of the Highest Good, Kant's practical postulation of the moral faith's object, God, is unsound.

### **The Need for the Highest Good**

Another frequent argument against the Highest Good is that it is redundant, commanding us to do nothing more than what is already commanded by the moral law. This view's leading advocate is Lewis White Beck who, in his canonical work *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, argues that:

my task is to realise the one condition of the summum bonum [HG(T)] which is within my power[virtue HG(S)]; it is seriously misleading to say that there is a command to seek the highest good which is different from the command to fulfil the requirements of duty (1960,244-45).

He adds that:

all the moral consequences of it [the ideal of the Highest Good] (as motive, as object) are drawn from one of its members (*bonum supremum* [HG(S)]), not from both (*bonum consummatum* [HG(T)]).

By advancing these views, Beck, according to Reath's typology, is a rejectionist. This is someone who does not accept any version of the Highest Good. Such a stance may be contrasted with the secularists, those who accept an immanent Highest Good but stop short of its use to practically postulate immortality and God. Nevertheless, they still see the Highest Good as applicable but in the sensible world as a regulative ideal. The final group are those who accept Kant's use of the Highest Good for moral theological purposes.<sup>143</sup>

Stephen Engstrom (1992,776ff,779) accepts the Highest Good but sees Kant's moral theological argument as redundant in the sense of over-determined since the Highest Good can already be established by the second and third formulations of the Categorical Imperative. Should that be the case, a separate duty in respect of the Highest Good is once again not needed and the practical postulates become superfluous. A related view is that of Friedman who holds that 'the highest good does not enlarge the sphere of moral responsibility' (1984,330). At the same time, he dissociates himself from any justification of the Highest Good as a social goal by adding that 'the highest good does not involve a moral command to produce happiness in proportion to virtue and to contribute thereby to the creation of a good world.' Finally Murphy (1965,102) sees yet other grounds for the Highest Good's redundancy, describing it as unnecessary and 'serving...extra-moral purposes theological purposes', a stance supported by Auxter (1979,121ff.). This would indeed be the case should Kant be introducing the Highest Good purely as the means by which he secures a place for God in his philosophical system, as opposed to a demand of his moral system.

Kant's case is that the Highest Good is required as practical reason's object whilst the moral law remains its ground. This would confirm the need for the Highest Good since Kant claims that it provides an essential component which would be otherwise missing from his moral system, namely an object. Although this stance preserves the moral law's paramount position, the Highest Good is the ultimate end of its application. This is the position adopted in the preface to the first edition of *Religion* where Kant argues that:

this is indeed only the idea of an object that unites within itself the formal condition of all such ends [of individual actions] as we ought to have (duty) with everything conditional upon ends we have and which conforms to duty (happiness proportioned to its observance), that is, the idea of a highest good in the world...in this way the human being evinces the need, effected in him by morality, of adding to the thought of his duties an ultimate end as well, as their consequence. (*Rel*,6:5,6)

Kant's argument only goes through, however, if no object has been identified logically prior to the Highest Good. His argument has merit since the moral law is based on the Categorical

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<sup>143</sup> The division into these three stances follows the classification advanced by Reath (cf. 1988,600ff.)

Imperative which must be free from all empirical conditions. It is thus purely formal and so requires an object in its application. Some scholars, such as John Silber (1959,483), see the formality of the moral law as empty. As a consequence, Silber strongly supports the Highest Good as the required moral object which would otherwise be absent. In contrast, whilst I regard this formality as providing the moral law with its two great strengths of ubiquity and timelessness, I do not share Silber's stance. Also, I acknowledge that Kant tells us 'when duty is the issue, morality can perfectly well abstract from ends altogether, and ought to do so' (*Rel*,6:4). Nevertheless, although the moral law is abstracted from all empirical conditions, it is still something to be applied. Application can only be in action. In the *Groundwork*, which preceded the second *Critique* by three years, Kant is quite clear that the Categorical Imperative which lies at the moral law's heart is used to validate the moral legality of our inclinations which arise in the sensible world we inhabit. In other words, our inclinations provide the matter for our assessment using the formal moral law. If the acting on an inclination is permitted by the moral law then the will preceding the action must already have an object, an end, since it is impossible to will nothing as Kant articulates in *Religion*:

[I]t [morality] has a necessary reference to such an end, not as the ground of its maxims but as a necessary consequence accepted in conformity to them. - For in the absence of all reference to an end, no determination of the will can take place in human beings at all (*Rel*,6:4).

In this way, it can be argued, as does Murphy (1965,102), that the moral law in use already has an end and therefore does not need the Highest Good as a further end. Such a stance is endorsed by R.Z. Friedman who holds that 'Kant does not hesitate to show how the categorical imperative, in its various formulations, might actually function in the determination of one's choices and decisions, and he does so with no reference to the highest good' (1984,330). A possible counter to Friedman is to concede that an act needs an end, but that such an end is particular to a given action whilst the Highest Good's function is to provide an overarching object. Such an object gathers together individual ends, relating them to an end-state of all moral actions, and thus providing a final end. This is Kant's position, but the need for the Highest Good as the necessary object of morality remains an open issue in my view.

### **Kant's Claim of Dependency**

In many ways this is the biggest challenge to the Highest Good because it has not been tabled by others, but by Kant himself. He makes a high risk move with respect to the Highest Good in the second *Critique* when he states:

Should, therefore, the highest good be impossible in accordance with practical rules, then the moral law, which commands us to further it, must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends, and must thereby be false in itself [*an sich falsch sein*] (*CPR*,5:114)

To my mind, this passage can only be read that Kant is holding here that failure of the Highest Good undermines the moral law, an unwarranted all or nothing move. It must be emphasised that Kant is not saying that if the Highest Good is impossible then the Highest Good is unfounded, but rather the *moral law* itself is false, a more fundamental claim. But this is in stark contrast to every other declaration by Kant on the status of the moral law. He repeatedly hammers that it is (i) derived from within using our rationality under the condition of freedom and (ii) self-sufficient. If Kant's assertion here in *CPR*,5:114 is correct, our rationality would be brought into question but this is difficult to accept as Kant's intention. As reservations about our rationality cannot be allowed without undermining Kant's complete philosophical system, it is rather the Highest Good itself which is brought into question by its arbitrary linkage with the moral law in this way. Now it is possible that, instead of arguing top-down from the Highest Good to rationality as I have done, Kant was arguing bottom-up from rationality. Specifically, because rationality and consequently the moral law *cannot* be challenged, the Highest Good, as a demand of the moral law in his eyes, cannot be challenged either. However, to my mind, Kant is here unnecessarily "betting the farm" on the Highest Good, the success of which is emerging as far from assured.

### **The Application of the Highest Good in Practice**

It is still worthwhile to grant, for argument's sake, that Kant has established that there is both a need for the Highest Good and a duty towards it as this then permits an examination of the challenges involved in applying the Highest Good in practice. It will be seen that the combined effect is a significant accumulation of intractable problems.

#### **1. The Highest Good and our part sensible nature**

Kant is emphatic that humans occupy a unique place in the world. They are neither fully rational as angels would be, nor are they wholly sensible as Kant holds animals to be. Human beings have both a rational and sensible nature. It is entirely understandable that we seek to satisfy both, the latter in the form of happiness. Kant holds that '[t]o be happy is necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being and therefore an unavoidable determining ground of its faculty of desire' (*CPR*,5:25). Or as Jacqueline Mariña states '[o]ur happiness has to do with our finite condition as beings of needs' (2000,335). The Highest Good then represents the synthesis of the end of our rational nature in virtue and the end of our sensible nature in happiness. However, whilst it is understandable due to the animal part of our nature that we pursue happiness, this does not entail that we have a duty to do so. Kant is clear on this issue:

One's own happiness is the subjective ultimate end of rational beings belonging to the world (they each have this end by virtue of their nature which is dependent on sensible objects; it would therefore be otiose to say of that end that one ought to have it) (*Rel*,6:6n).

In Smith's view, it is only a subjective requirement which 'adds no new content to the objectively obligatory determining ground of the pure will' (1984,185). In support, Smith calls on the *Groundwork* to highlight that 'the rule to seek happiness must be what Kant called a practical precept rather than a categorical imperative' (cf. *GW*,4:418). He pinpoints that the weak spot is Kant's claim that the Highest Good is the necessary object of *pure* practical reason.<sup>144</sup> Rather, Smith considers that 'the meaning of "pure practical reason" has been equivocated by giving a subjective necessity [happiness] the same dignity as the objective necessity of the moral law, merely because both are *knowable a priori*' (1984,171). Knowing *a priori* that the pursuit of happiness is rational is quite different from such pursuit being a duty. However, if a duty toward the Highest Good is to be established *a priori*, and if we temporally regard the Highest Good as an aggregation rather than a synthesis, the minimum that Kant must do is first to establish *a priori* that we have a duty to pursue our own happiness. Yet this he explicitly rejects. (cf. *Rel*,6:6n above).

## 2. The Highest Good reintroduces heteronomy

This is a particular risk if virtue (regarded now not as series of actions but as the resultant state of being virtuous) is held to be the worthiness to be happy. In this case, happiness is recognised as the proper reward for moral behaviour, yet this must not form the motivation for obeying the moral law. In the *Groundwork* Kant is clear that the moral law's source is our rational nature which, under conditions of freedom, permits our autonomy. He equally explicitly denies that externally defined systems, whether religious or legal, can form the moral law's basis, terming any law derived from such external sources heteronomy. Further, he establishes that the only allowable incentive for obeying the moral law is the respect we have for it as a product of our rationality. Critics, such as Beck and Caygill, see Kant's Highest Good as undermining our autonomy by considerations of happiness, where worthiness to be happy implies anticipated reward. This would make morality prudential and thus a hypothetical rather than a categorical imperative. Beck holds that:

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<sup>144</sup> Engstrom provides a helpful differentiation between practical reason and pure practical reason: 'the object of practical reason and the object of pure practical reason are distinguished by means of the distinction between actions whose determining ground is the object to be realised and actions whose determining ground is the *a priori* law of reason (the moral law)' (1992,756).

Kant simply cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that the highest good is a motive for the pure will, and then say that it is so only under the human limitation that man must have an object which is not exclusively moral. (1963,244)

Murphy takes a similar line in his rejection of the potential role played by happiness as the material element in the Highest Good, happiness:

For Kant explicitly tells us that it any ground other than the moral law serves as determining ground for the will the result is heteronomy...It is only in so far as the moral law itself (the *bonum supremum* [HS(S)]) is contained in the highest good that it can as a determining ground for a free will (1965,105).

A closely related objection is that, in the moral law's derivation based on the Categorical Imperative, happiness is not mentioned. This stance is taken by Auxter who states that 'the duty to promote the highest good is central to his system [but] the formulations of the categorical imperative he offers and the examples of duties he cites do not appear to be relevant to this duty' (1979,121). Even one of the strongest supporters of the secular Highest Good, Silber (cf.1974,214), agrees with this. We should not expect to find happiness in the Categorical Imperative since the strength of Kant's derivation rests on its apriority and its abstraction from all empirical effects in the sensible world as discussed earlier. In addition, in the *Groundwork*, Kant dismissed happiness as a possible basis for the moral law since happiness is both indeterminate and there can be no guarantee that one individual's happiness is compatible with another's. Yet, through the Highest Good, Kant's critics see him re-introducing happiness into moral considerations via the back-door. For example, Caygill expresses this view as 'happiness is excluded from the determination of moral action only to return as its indispensable accompaniment in the highest good' (1995,233).

### 3. The Future Intelligible World

There are two problems here. The first is that the future world is purely intelligible. Now virtue consists in obeying the moral law when there is the alternative to do otherwise. It is having alternatives which makes following the moral law into an obligation in Kant's eyes; if we could not do otherwise there would be no moral worth. Doing otherwise manifests itself in this world when we incorporate into our maxims those sensible inclinations which conflict with the moral law. Yet in the future world there will be no sensible inclinations as it is purely intelligible. Indeed, if what is unique to humans is our dual nature, sensible and intelligible, then without the former, it could be argued that we are no longer uniquely human in the way Kant sees. Although our actions would comply with the moral law, they would be without moral worth and so the Highest Good's first component, virtue, cannot be displayed no matter how earnest the pursuit. Reinforcing such an interpretation is Kant's statement at *Rel*,6:37



that happiness consists in 'the incentives of inclination'. Happiness so defined applies only to our present, sensible world. This means that the Highest Good's first component, virtue, is not applicable in a future world and that thus we do not need God to guarantee in proper proportion the provision of the second, happiness, to the non-existent worthy. Or in other words, if we cannot first pursue virtue in the intelligible world, there is nothing for which we can be rewarded. Such a conclusion is shared by Fackenheim who states:

For if (as the argument for immortality asserts) we are able infinitely to approximate holiness, provided only we are given the 'time' to do it, we approximate a state in which we can longer stand in need of happiness, and the need for a God who dispenses happiness disappears (1996,8).

In other words, the holiness which we asymptotically approach and are eventually granted access to by God in recognition of our necessarily deficient efforts is a state where we are free from sensible inclinations. Therefore, not only are we incapable of holiness through following the moral law (see p.149) but also no longer capable of happiness as defined by Kant and thus no longer needing a God to deliver it.

The second difficulty arises from the future world's atemporality, Fackenheim seeing this further problem as:

The concepts of immortality and God are incompatible with the conclusions of Kant's most fundamental philosophical doctrines. For if temporality and sensuality can belong only to phenomena, they cannot belong to the soul in a non-phenomenal existence. Yet without time and sensual desire how can there be moral struggle and moral progress? (1996,8).

It was argued above that, in the second *Critique* and confirmed in *Religion*, Kant moves his ground concerning the Highest Good, from something to be achieved to something to be pursued through endless progress. He subsequently argues that God recognises our asymptotic progress towards the Highest Good as equivalent to actually achieving it (see also 4. below). As already noted, if the future world is purely intelligible, it does not stand under conditions of time but "endless" is a temporal expression. Also change is only discernible in time, so that change itself, and hence progress, is ruled out.

Significantly, Kant himself offers us in *The End of All Things* this same view on time which thus challenges his own notion of 'endless progress' towards the Highest Good in the intelligible world to come:

[H]enceforth there shall be no alteration; for if there were still alteration in the world, then time would also exist, because alteration can only take place in time and is not thinkable without presupposing it (*End*,8.333).

Moreover, Kant warns us against any attempt to unscramble this paradox and define or ascribe activities and processes to the intelligible world:

Now here is represented an end of all things as objects of sense – of which we cannot form any concept at all, because we will inevitably entangle ourselves in contradictions as soon as we try to take a single step beyond the sensible world into the intelligible.. (*End*,8.333)

In sum, progress towards the achievement of the Highest Good and the timelessness of the world in which we are to display such progress are mutually exclusive.

#### 4. God's Recognition of Progress towards the Highest Good

The Highest Good as something to be pursued rather than achieved comes with a high price tag. In the second *Critique*, Kant argues that, because only God can ensure the correct relationship between the Highest Good's two components by seeing that virtue is properly rewarded with happiness, He can be practically postulated on moral grounds (cf. *CPR*,5:125). But, at two places in *Religion*, Kant confirms that we need God to recognise our pursuit as equivalent to achievement:

For him who penetrates to the intelligible ground of the heart...for him to whom this endless progress is a unity, i.e. for God, this is the same as actually being a good human being (pleasing to him) (*Rel*,6:48).

We can think of the infinite progression of the good toward conformity with the [moral] law as being judged by him who scrutinises the heart (through his pure intellectual intuition) to be a perfected whole (*Rel*,6:67).

The introduction of this caveat raises a serious concern whether the postulation of God on the basis of *CPR*,5:125 can still proceed. On the one hand, has God just got two jobs to do now rather than one, namely (i) recognise when our pursuit of virtue counts as achievement and then having done so (ii) ensure the correct relationship between virtue and happiness? On the other hand, as Byrne (cf.2007,116) pinpoints, do we need already to have a God in order to achieve the Highest Good's first component, complete virtue, before His postulation in order to secure the correct relationship between that complete virtue and the second component, happiness? This is important because inability to achieve virtue in this sensible world is used by Kant to postulate immortality, *not* God.

The second practical postulate, God, cannot be put forward to ensure the reward for complete virtue if we never achieve this. Thus it is important that our earnest pursuit is recognised in God's eyes as equivalent to achievement. For Kant, that God is needed to ensure the correct relationship between the Highest Good's two components is a demand of pure practical reason ultimately based on the claimed duty towards the Highest Good. To take God's existence as a given in order that He can make up the difference between our pursuit of virtue and its total achievement rests on no such basis. God has been arbitrarily called into existence

before he is postulated. In other words, He must already be assumed to exist in order to bring about the condition which calls for His postulation. This begs the question.

God's role in recognising our pursuit as equivalent to achievement brings a related problem with it which Mariña has identified. It also flows from our endless asymptotic progress. She states that 'it [the Highest Good] occurs in another world and is something brought about by God's activity not our own' (2000,330). In other words, if God is required to deliver it by recognising our pursuit as achievement, it is impossible for us. But it is questionable whether a duty to pursue the impossible can be a duty at all since for Kant "ought presupposes can". However, it is on the basis of a duty towards the Highest Good that God was postulated in the first place. In short, if the duty is unsubstantiated, God is unneeded.

### **Highest Good - The Conclusion**

It is now time to return to this chapter's purpose. This was to establish a clear stance on the Highest Good which in turn can be directed towards the moral proof, moral faith, and authentic theodicy, the links further up the chain of dependency.

Because of the Highest Good's critical importance to the success or otherwise of Kant's authentic theodicy, this chapter has undertaken two investigations into its workability only to find that it has come up short in both. Firstly, whilst the need for the Highest Good remained an open issue, the required *a priori* deduction of a duty towards it was absent. If for the sake of argument, such a duty were to be established, then there are still severe problems that undermine any attempt to apply the Highest Good in practice. Of these, two problems stand out. First, how moral improvement is possible in a purely intelligible world which is timeless and where there are no sensible inclinations. Second, if the Highest Good can only be pursued and never achieved through our own efforts, we seem to require a God to first create the conditions under which He can be postulated.

Thus, in my judgement, an unambiguous conclusion can now be drawn; the Highest Good does not and cannot do the work Kant demanded of it. How is this result positioned within the scholarship on the Highest Good? Above, Reath's tripartite typology was set out: rejectionists, secularists, and those who accept the moral theological purposes to which Kant puts the concept. However, my conclusion cannot be comfortably fitted into Reath's schema. An alternative and more colourful schema has been advanced by Lance Simmons (1993). His first group are those who regard the Highest Good as an albatross hung unnecessarily hung around the neck of Kant's moral philosophy. This corresponds broadly to the rejectionists, Beck *et al.*

The second group are those who hold that the Highest Good is the keystone of Kant's moral philosophical structure, Simmons stating:

[I]f vindicated, the highest good would be revealed as the keystone of Kantian ethics, uniting the good will with the purely formal categorical imperative, in virtue of being itself a morally obligatory intentional object with genuine material content. (1993,361)

The third group identify the Highest Good's Achilles Heel. To continue Simmons' architectural analogy, they agree that the Highest Good is the keystone but see it failing in its function of locking the whole structure together. My conclusion on the Highest Good would admit me to this final group. However, the most significant conclusion, given the purposes of this study, is that Kant's authentic theodicy is a failure since the Highest Good which provides its ultimate foundation fails to bear the load which Kant places upon it.

## CONCLUSION

In the Introduction I tabled the major theses for which I would be arguing. Having completed the examination of Kant's thought on theodicy, the key conclusions for each of the six theses are now highlighted.

### *(a). Kant had a career-long concern with theodicy*

This was the thesis that underpinned the whole study. Kant's career has been examined in three distinct periods, the pre-Critical, early-Critical, and late-Critical. In each, it was seen there was much of theodical relevance. In the first period, his concern started in Reflections 3703-5 from 1753/4 and was set in the context of Leibniz's theodicy. In 1759 he endorsed one key element of that theodicy, the best possible world. Thereafter, his relevant thought concerned the three major elements required for a theodicy, the existence of God, the nature of evil, and the freedom of human action together with the interaction between these elements. In the second period, his thought evolved, retaining some elements from the pre-Critical period, changing others, and introducing new elements that would come to full bloom in the third period. However, at the end of the second period there were significant unresolved tensions in matters relevant to any theodicy he might advance. These primarily lay in the seeming inconsistencies between the first *Critique* and views espoused in the later *Lectures*. His epistemology had run ahead of his thought on theodicy. In the final period, epistemology and theodicy were brought into alignment when Kant adopted his definitive stance on theodicy in the 1791 treatise *Failure*. There, consistent with the Critical epistemology, he rejected all philosophical theodicies but advanced his own 'authentic' version based on practical reason. This was immediately followed by his last major work of theodical relevance, *Religion*. In this, he set down his ultimate view on evil, one of theodicy's essential elements. On the basis of the evidence presented in the study and summarised here, I hold that Kant did indeed have a career-long concern with theodicy. This concern manifested itself in the following ways.

### *(b). Kant's stance on theodicy developed through his career*

Kant was concerned with the nature of both God and evil and the relationship between the two throughout his career even though he did not formally draw them together or use the word "theodicy" until *Failure*. Kant's thought on theodicy was continuous in the sense of career-long but discontinuous in the sense of the far-reaching change wrought with *Failure*. The relationship between God and evil was not static for Kant. His efforts to establish a definitive stance on this relationship under the condition of freedom form an extended search for the reasoned explanation that must ground an effective theodicy. The context in which

theodicy was situated at the start of his career was set by Leibniz's *Theodicy* but we saw him slowly distancing himself from this. It was established that in both his pre-Critical and early-Critical periods Kant held that philosophical theodicies were possible but what such a theodicy consisted in was subject to development. He definitively broke with Leibniz's theodicy and philosophical theodicies in general in *Failure*.

*(c) Kant did not reject all theodicies*

This can be regarded as a corollary of (b). Kant certainly rejected philosophical theodicies where "philosophical" is taken in special sense of "theoretical, speculative" but advanced his own authentic theodicy. However, an argument that he did not reject all theodicies can only succeed once Kant's expansion of the area covered by "theodicy" is allowed. It was no longer just the attempted reconciliation through theoretical, speculative, reason of the apparent incompatibility between the presence of evil and God. It now also encompassed the effort to provide a reasoned explanation underpinned by practical, moral, reason. In advancing his authentic theodicy, Kant found a middle ground between the philosophical theodicies which he rejected and the fideism which was equally unacceptable to him.

*(d) Kant's work in other areas constrained his theodicy*

Several constraints were identified which had the cumulative effect of circumscribing Kant's eventual explicit theodicy, the authentic theodicy, and limiting it to the moral sphere. There were two principal constraints, the first of which emerged in the pre-Critical period. With his adoption of Newtonian principles in *Universal Natural History*, Kant came to see that what had been regarded as physical evil was not so. Nature was morally indifferent. That the operation of the universal and unchanging laws of nature brought suffering to humans was not in doubt, but it was not evil. As such, it could not be divine punishment for moral evil. For this reason, such natural harm no longer had to be accounted for in a theodicy. The second major constraint came from the Critical epistemology in which Kant established the boundary to our knowledge, showing that knowledge of God is beyond our reach. Whilst this epistemology clearly impacted much more than just theodicy in Kant's subsequent thought, the specific effect on would-be theodicies was that those reliant on claimed knowledge of God must necessarily fail.

*(e) Metaphysical Evil conceived as limitation and Radical Evil perform the same function*

Kant's stance on evil evolved through his career. In *Negative Magnitudes*, whilst still retaining metaphysical evil conceived as limitation in the Leibnizian tradition, Kant now saw a class of evil that was ontologically real but with a negative value when compared to the good. In

*Lectures*, Kant appeared to revert to his original stance. However, when the notion of radical evil, as advanced in *Religion*, was examined, it was found to perform the same function as Leibnizian metaphysical evil conceived as limitation, namely that of being the ground of the possibility of evil. Neither was evil itself. In this way, Kant's rejection in *Failure* of metaphysical evil as morally accountable was given added weight. Further, for Kant, by elimination, the real evil to be reconciled with God's properties in any theodicy was now confined to just one type, that done by humans, moral evil.

*(f) Kant's authentic theodicy fails*

This formed the culminating thesis to this study. As Kant held that previous, philosophical, theodicies had failed, it was essential that his own theodicy should also be fully investigated to establish the extent to which it succeeded or failed. The last two chapters of the study were devoted to this. In effect, Kant's authentic theodicy was subject to three separate tests. For authentic theodicy to fail, it is enough that it fails just one of the tests but it fails all three. Firstly, authentic theodicy does not meet the requirement of Kant's own definition that a reasoned explanation is given which reconciled the apparently irreconcilable, namely the counter-purposive and a theistic God. Whilst it was reasoned in that it depended on practical (as opposed to theoretical) reason, it only addressed injustice which concerns the *relationship* between moral evil and (un)happiness. Authentic theodicy does not tackle the underlying issue of moral evil, the allowance of which by God is left unaddressed. Instead, authentic theodicy just urges trust in God's moral wisdom in applying the one moral law, a would-be theodicy of postponement. In addition, it did not tackle the issue, ever-present from Kant's pre-Critical days, of why an omniscient God would choose to create a world knowing that evil would result. That man was directly responsible for moral evil does not address God's indirect but ultimate responsibility. Secondly, Kant's crucial claim that we have a duty to pursue the Highest Good over and above that to the moral law was examined. Whilst our duty in respect to the moral law cannot be questioned, the derivation of one towards the Highest Good was absent. Thirdly, setting aside the results of the first two tests, when the application of the Highest Good was examined, serious problems emerged which undermined its practical value. Given the results of these tests, I hold that Kant's authentic theodicy must be ranked with philosophical theodicies as a failure.

However, this summary of findings cannot suffice as the conclusion to this study. We must ask what hinges on these findings. Two issues must be addressed before the study can properly be drawn to a close. First, the wider significance and consequences of authentic theodicy's failure must be marked out in general terms. Second, whether anything can be salvaged from its

failure must be determined. Whilst these two issues cannot be fully addressed within the scope available to this study, neither can they be altogether ignored.

Addressing the first issue, the next link moving up the chain of dependency from the Highest Good is Kant's moral proof and so the wider consequence is that proof's failure *in toto* not just with respect to authentic theodicy. The proof's failure imperils Kant's whole project of philosophical theology. One consequence of Kant's revolutionary Critical epistemology was the demonstration that we could not have knowledge of supersensible entities and he famously wrote at Bxxx 'Thus I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**'. We have seen that the faith which Kant wanted to justify was a moral faith, and since he held that the morality underpinning this faith had its basis in practical reason, it was also rational for him. I have emphasised that this was important for Kant since by that means he ensured two continuing and fundamental aims of his philosophy were met, the primacy of reason and a place for God in the resultant system. However, now that the rational basis of his faith has been undermined with the failure of the Highest Good, is this faith now irrational and Kant, not in intent but in effect, is a fideist after all? I do not consider that a simple disjunction between rational faith and irrational fideism has to be accepted. For, as Chignell (2007,336) states, 'belief, for Kant, is not irrational assent...to something that we have sufficient grounds to deny' and the failure of the Highest Good does not change this. Recalling Kant's own discrimination in *Negative Magnitudes* between pleasure, lack of pleasure and displeasure or the difference between immoral and amoral, I want to term Kant's faith arational. Such a faith does not offend against rationality but neither is it supported by it. Indeed we have seen Job, Kant's hero, hinting at this when admitting to 'having hastily spoken about things which are too high for him and which he does not understand' (*Failure*,8:266). However, whilst Kant's philosophical theology is weakened, it is important to emphasise that there is no threat whatsoever to the moral law developed in the *Groundwork* on the basis of our rationality under conditions of freedom. The self-sufficiency of the moral law is a steady drumbeat in Kant's later works and the clearest example of this is given at very start of the preface to the first edition of *Religion*:

So far as morality is based on the conception of the human being as one who is free but who also, just because of that, binds himself through laws, it is in need neither of the idea of another being above him in order that he recognise his duty, nor, that he observe it, of an incentive other than the law itself[.] Hence on its own behalf morality in no way needs religion (whether objectively, as regards willing, or subjectively, as regards capability) but is rather self-sufficient by virtue of pure practical reason (*Rel*,6:3)

This example has the benefit of not only affirming the moral law's self-sufficiency but also showing its independence of any proof for God's existence, the moral proof thus included, and



of any supervening religion. As we have seen in Chapter 10, the only danger was introduced by Kant himself by his inexplicably linking the failure of the moral law to that of the Highest Good (cf. *CPR*, 5:114 and p.156). The moral law is *not* invalidated by the failure of the Highest Good, *Punkt aus*. This Kant confirms when considering the person who does not accept the moral proof for God based on the Highest Good:

Every rational being would still have to recognise himself as forever strictly bound to the precept of morals; for its laws are formal and command unconditionally, without regard to ends (*CPI*, 5:451).

But what of the Highest Good itself? What, if anything, is left over from Kant's concept of the Highest Good? Even when viewed charitably, not a lot I fear. Above, I have argued that the theological concept of the Highest Good cannot perform its assigned role. It must therefore be discounted. But, viewed perhaps uncharitably, was Kant's Highest Good, in effect rather than intent, ever anything more than traditional Christian teaching? Namely that the harm and suffering of this world will somehow be made up for by God in the next where the good and the evil will receive their rightful reward/punishment? As Kant himself states in *Religion* when referring to the future '[h]ere belongs the belief that there is no good action which will not have its good consequence in the world to come for him who performs it' (*Rel*, 6:162n). The rejectionists have no use for the Kantian Highest Good since they regard the moral law as all that is needed to guide human conduct correctly. This leaves the secularists<sup>145</sup> who hold that the Highest Good can be applied in this world. However, we have seen that the happiness therein could not include non-contingent freedom from natural harm and from the suffering arising from the immoral actions of others. Neither individuals nor societies can deliver these two freedoms. Of course, personal happiness as conditioned by the moral law remains, as opposed to being in proportion to virtue (see p.147 for a discussion of this distinction). But this, once more, is just the moral law in action. So we are then left with a Highest Good which is just a watered-down regulative goal that prescribes that somehow human affairs should be ordered so that the good prosper and the evil do not. But this seems to be little more than a general sentiment to which well-minded people would assent without committing themselves to any specific actions or outcome. So taking all three stances together, there is indeed not a lot left.

Moving to the second issue, it must be asked if moral faith can survive the failure of the Highest Good to perform the role laid down for it by Kant. This is a question which has been left largely unaddressed by the rejectionists and secularists, who do not seem to fully engage with the implications of their stance on the Highest Good. In other words, does its failure and

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<sup>145</sup> Half the scholars whose work on the Highest Good was sampled for this study (see footnote 13).

hence that of the moral proof mean the end of moral faith *per se*? This question is important for this study because I argued in Chapter 10 that the reliance on moral faith, the immediate support for Kant's authentic theodicy, was well-founded.

The answer here depends on whether moral faith can be separated from rational faith. In one sense, by endeavouring to show that his faith was rational, Kant wanted to have his cake and eat it. A suitable illustration of the latter can be seen in a citation highlighted previously, that 'no one will ever be able to boast that he **knows** there is a God and a future life[.] No, the conviction is not **logical** but **moral** certainty' (A828/B856). Kant is here still appealing to a form of certainty but one that nevertheless falls short of knowledge. As Brachtendorf puts it, Kant's *Glaubenssache* possesses a lower level of certainty when compared with knowledge (cf. 2002,64). Furthermore, moral faith is being equated by Kant with moral certainty, but faith with complete certainty would no longer be faith. Kant had no choice but to follow his own epistemology and deny knowledge of God. However, he wanted at the same time to hang on to something certain in place of knowledge, something which was less than it in the theoretical sense but equated with it in another, practical sense. Any faith which survives the failure of the Highest Good is a simpler faith and one which does not rely on the crutch provided by the moral proof. We recall that the fundamental tenet of authentic theodicy is the placing one's trust in God's moral wisdom. There is nothing to stop a person still doing that but on the basis of a different kind of faith to the one envisaged by Kant. After all, when Job put his trust in God's moral wisdom, notwithstanding all indications to the contrary, he did not do so supported by Kant's construction of moral faith; he just put his trust in God's moral judgement pure and simple. Job's is still a moral faith but it is not one which meets the characteristics of moral faith as set out by Kant. A related question is the following: now that authentic theodicy as constructed by Kant has been seen to fail, does that mean the end of theodicy taken in the widened sense employed by Kant? I judge not. Rather what has happened is that Kant's famous statement at Bxxx now has a strengthened meaning. The failure of authentic theodicy means that, in addition to Kant denying knowledge, *all* forms of certainty in matters of faith must be dispensed with. Theodicy can still survive. Let it be called fundamental theodicy; it is the theodicy of Job, a theodicy of trust and patience but this is no longer the reasoned explanation which Kant sought. Indeed theodicy is truly now a *Glaubenssache*. After all, the failure of authentic theodicy and the moral proof does not entail that Kant's statement below is now inapplicable:

This commanded effect [the Highest Good], **together with the sole conditions of its possibility that are conceivable for us**, namely the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are **matters of faith** (res fidei) (CPJ,5:469) (Kant's emphasis in bold).

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